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FALCONRY

IN THE

VALLEY OF THE INDUS.

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BY

RICHARD F. BURTON,

LIEUT. BOMBAY ARMY.

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TO

THE ROYAL PATRON OF THE NOBLE ART,

IN THIS OUR MODERN DAY,

HIS MOST GRACIOUS MAJESTY WILLIAM III.,

KING OF THE NETHERLANDS,

THESE PAGES,

INTENDED TO ILLUSTRATE THE PRACTICE OF

FALCONRY IN THE EAST,

ARE,

WITH PERMISSION,

RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED BY

HIS MAJESTY'S

MOST OBEDIENT HUMBLE SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

THE Knight no longer rides out with hawk on fist, and falconers, and cages, and greyhounds behind, to chase the swift curlew, or to strike down the soaring heron. In these piping days of peace and civilization

> "The pointer ranges, and the said Knight beats
> In russet jacket,"

his broad acres, well stocked with barn-door partridges, or,—if an ambitious man,—he gets up a pheasant-battue for greater excitement. And the knight's lady, instead of mounting her fiery jennet, with merlin clasping her embroidered glove, thinks a drive round Hyde Park, or a canter down Rotten Row, quite sufficient exercise in these times for her highly nervous and thoroughly civilized constitution.

"A handful is a sample of a heap," say the

Persians. This specimen of a change in the Knight's and his Lady's habits is a fair measure of the difference between the days of our ancestors and our own.

So Falconry can scarcely be considered a popular subject now.

Yet there are many gentlemen in England who would willingly see the good old sport conjured up from its black letter sepulture. They love the look of the thing, the pomp of its apparatus, the excitement of witnessing the combined working of horses, hawks and hounds; and above all things, the pleasing novelty of the ancient diversion. I only wonder that the taste is not a more general one amongst us. In the Netherlands we see a better example—royalty itself not disdaining at times to exchange the sceptre for the glove.

There is an eternal sameness in the operation of shooting, which must make it,—one would suppose,—very uninteresting to any but those endowed with an undue development of Destructiveness. It is a strange sight to see a man toiling at one amusement from early autumn to

early spring, knocking over his birds almost unerringly, with fifty appliances to rob them of all chance of escape. One would think a change would be grateful, ay, in time, even to the gamekeepers, horror struck, as they of course would be, were the idea of the outlandish sport suddenly suggested to them. Our ancestors took up the gun and allowed the "nobles of the air" to be shot down as vermin. We can be wiser than they, and enjoy both amusements combined.

My first step in the noble art was taken when a boy in France; the poor kestrel upon which I tried my "prentice hand" died, if memory serves me, like an Eastern Jogee, worn out by the rigidity of its rapidly succeeding fasts.

The failure of this and other juvenile attempts discouraged me, but did not do away with the taste. Even in the bosom of that single-minded old dame, Alma Mater, I managed to hunt out a work on Falconry and studied its pleasant pages with an interest which Porson, Paley, and Niebuhr never gave. The only bitter thought they suggested was the difficulty of putting into

practice the erudite precepts in which they largely dealt.

Judge, therefore, gentle reader, how great was my joy when I found myself in a country where the noble sport flourishes in all its pristine glory. I shall never forget the profound satisfaction with which, after securing the services of an experienced Beloch, I succeeded in seeling a hawk for the first time.

After keeping many birds, and borrowing more from my native friends for some time, I began to commit my observations to paper, and the following pages are the result of my personal experience.

The European falconer will find in them some points which are perfectly new to him. I am convinced that the race of round or short-winged hawks has been unduly depreciated, and that by selecting good birds and by careful training, excellent sport is to be got out of them. Even Sir John Sebright, in the excellent little work* which is the manual for students of the present

* Observations on Hawking, by Sir John Saunders Sebright, M.P. Henry Wright, 51, Haymarket.

day, has attacked the Goshawk with great severity; the humble judgment of my experience is, that he has been guilty of *scandalum magnatum* against her reputation and good fame. And after turning over the leaves of many books, I find in none of them, taken separately or combined, so perfect a system of reclaiming and manning the birds as that now practised in the East. Lastly, the Oriental way of throwing up the smaller hawks, described in Chapter III., is, as far as I know, a new, and also a very efficient one.

To obviate, if possible, the dryness of a regular treatise, I have attempted a narrative form, describing a visit paid some years ago to one Meer Ibrahim Khan, a scion of the House of Talpur, lately reigning in Scinde, and a falconer of distinguished fame.

In a previous work on the Unhappy Valley, this gentleman was made the subject of a chapter or two; he is now introduced to the courteous reader in a new and perhaps a more favourable character.

I have not avoided using terms of art when they present themselves, because they convey a

far more precise and intelligible meaning than does the vague language of the unlettered. And in conclusion, I venture to express a hope that my readers will not pronounce the death of the antelope, as narrated in the last pages of this little volume, "marvellously entertaining and incredible." They have only to ask the veriest tyro in the art, that ever rode after a falcon in the East, and he will assure them that such a wonder is an every-day one.

London,
15*th November*, 1851.

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FALCONRY

IN THE

VALLEY OF THE INDUS.

CHAPTER I.

THE UNTIMELY END OF KHAIRU THE HOBBY.

We,—that is to say, my friend Ibrahim Khan Talpoor, with Kakoo Mall his secretary, and I, supported by Hari Chand,—were passing the last of an active day's hours spent amongst the marshes, in our reed arm-chairs, under the spreading Neem trees of the Ameer's village. Behind us lay my modest encampment, a tent or two, half a dozen canvas sheds, tenanted by government Khalassis;* horses picketed in their night clothes; camels at squat, apparently ruminating on many a grievance; "Pepper," the terrier, looking even more spiteful than usual, because tied up to prevent

* Tent-pitchers, surveying assistants, &c.

his polluting the garments of the Faithful,* and motley little groups of Scindian beaters, Hindoo chainmen and rodmen, Affghan "horse-keepers," and Brahui camel-men, scattered about in all directions. Conspicuous among them stood Antonio the Portuguese butler, in the dignity of a jacket, and Gaetano, his *aide-de-camp*, with a face like a mandril's, a shirt distended to a balloon shape by the evening breeze, and a striped calico pantaloon *collant*, taut drawn as the wet leathers into which an Oxford buck of the last generation used to be shaken and packed by the united force of his scout and groom.

Directly in front of us, so placed that they could enjoy a full view of our every movement, sat a semi-circle of the Ameer's retainers, smoking, conversing, and listening to the words of wisdom that fell from our lips, as gravely as a British jury empanneled on a matter of life and death.

It was a fine December evening in Scinde, very like the close of a fine May day in England. The western sky was blushing rosy red as it received the sun into its bosom, the gentle breeze felt cool and sounded crisp, light mists began to float on the distant horizon, and over the uninteresting forms of the foreground, lay a veil of purple

* The touch of a dog being impure to the Moslem.

light and reddish shade, that forced the eye to linger upon them with pleasure. In fine, the view before us was a mass of common-place beauty which the oftener we see the more we learn to admire and love.

A purling rill, artificial, but to be mistaken for natural, coursed within a few yards of our feet on its way towards a little stuccoed cistern, in the midst of the Ameer's jujube garden. Over it stood the Neem trees, throwing thick shades from their emerald arms, and rustling in the evening breeze with a sweet melancholy significance.

At such an hour,—in such a scene,—could Oriental gravity fail to fall into pensiveness, pensiveness into that terrible habit of moralizing in which Orientals love to indulge?

"Ah!" said the Ameer, "how happily might not one spend one's life under a tree like that," pointing to a peculiarly tall one,—"only, however, taking care to put mats round it by way of walls. How long one would last! and how much one would eat!"

The time was after dinner: the Ameer's sentiment a remarkable one for that time. Hari Chand and Kakoo Mall (who both had dined) uttered their "Wah Wahs!"* but looked at each other furtively, and, methought, with *goguenard*

* Bravos!

glances. The idea of living under greenwood was that of a Jat.*

"The Neem tree!" exclaimed Kakoo, who felt bound to support his patron, "justly is it called the Azad Darakht,†—the free tree—it blooms eternally like the doer of good works"—(Kakoo, remember, was a notable scoundrel);—"and it bears no fruit, like the man of God whose harvest is not in this life."

The Ameer was affected, so was the crowd; each man mentally comparing Kakoo and his own picture of the *melia azadirachta*, detrimentally to the former.

"Verily, yes," responded Hari; "and it profits the world in its generation; its leaves are an antidote to the poison of snakes, even as content is to the gnawings of worldliness"—(Hari was at least as bad as Kakoo);—"besides, its twigs are useful as tooth-sticks."‡

"But not equal to those of the Arak,"§ broke in the Ameer; "our blessed Prophet used these,

* A gipsey, or wild man.

† Hence the botanical name of the tree, *melia azadirachta*: the leaves made up into balls are swallowed as an antidote to the venom of the cobra.

‡ Orientals use a stick chewed to softness at one end, instead of the European tooth-brush.

§ A kind of Salvadora, common in Arabia, Persia and Scinde (where it is called Khabbar), &c.

therefore should every true Moslem do the same. However, ye say truth, the Neem tree is a Fakir."

"About which," pursued Hari Chand, "the poet sang—

'Man's nature alters not;
The Neem remains bitter, though you water it with milk and honey.'"

We were jogging very prettily, I began to think, along the beaten track of Oriental conversation, when our course was arrested by an unforeseen incident.

Instead of the occasional cawings and croakings of crows, to which the ear of the Indian traveller by habit speedily becomes deaf, suddenly arose such a din of corvine voices, such shrieks and such a clashing of wings above and around us, that not one of the conversationists or the listeners but that turned his head.

The crow is a kind of sacred bird amongst the Hindoos, which fact accounts, in some degree, for his uncommon impertinence. He is fed at certain seasons with boiled rice and other delicacies, so that he never, at any time, can witness the operation of cooking with the slightest attempt at patience. I have seen him again and again swoop at a dog and carry off a bone which he persuades the hungry brute to drop, by a sharp application

of his stout, pointed bill upon its muzzle. At times I have expected to be attacked myself by the friends and relations of the deceased, when, after half an hour's dance with St. Vitus to the tune of some villanous old scout's croak, I disposed of the musician by an ounce of shot. And if you wish to enjoy a fine display of feathered viciousness, order your servant to climb up a tree full of crows, and to rob the nearest nest. At such seasons it is as well to stand by with a loaded gun or two, otherwise the sport might end in something earnest to the featherless biped.

The reason of the row was soon explained. Gaetano had thoughtlessly left a half-plucked chicken preparing for my supper within sight of a sentinel crow, whose beat was the bough of a neighbouring Neem tree. In a moment it was pounced upon, seized, and carried off. On one side all the comrades of the plunderer flocked together to share in the spoils which he resolved to appropriate, and most violent was the scene that ensued. On the other, up rushed the cook, the butler, the Khalassis, and all the horse-keepers, as excited as the crows, determined to recover with sticks and stones the innocent cause of the turmoil.

"Send in for Khairu, the Laghar," said the Ameer, in a whispering voice to Kakoo, as if

afraid of being overheard by some listening crow. He certainly thought that if he spoke loud the birds would recognize the name, and really after some study of their idiosyncrasy, I did not treat the precaution of his tone lightly. Æsop had no experience in the character of the Indian "Kak,"* otherwise he would not have made the Fox outwit the Crow.

One of the attendants rose slowly from the ground, and looking indifferently around him, went off by a *détour* towards the palace.

Presently appeared two men dressed in green, with a large sheet spread between their shoulders so as to cover their near arms. Behind them came the attendants carrying a dozen pellet and other bows.

The pellet-bow merits a short description;—it would be a prodigious acquisition in Europe to naughty little boys who delight in breaking their neighbours' windows. It is made of a slip of bamboo, bent in the shape of our ancient weapon; as the old proverb advises, it has two strings stretched parallel to each other from horn to horn. About the centre a bit of canvas or coarse cloth, an inch or an inch and a half in length, is sewn tightly to the two cords, and against it the pellet, a lump of hard clay, about the size of a "taw,"

* Kawla, or kawwa, a crow.

is firmly held by the thumb and forefinger, which draw the bow.

By dint of practice the natives of India can use this instrument upon small birds with fatal effect: the range is from sixty to eighty yards. To a tyro the only inconvenience of it is the occasional smashing of the pellet upon the thumb knuckle of the left hand, an event quite the reverse of agreeable, and which invariably brings on a repetition of itself, in consequence of Tyro's nervous anxiety to avoid it.

The sight of these preparations for destruction in the servants' hands elicited one long loud caw from every crow that happened to be looking that way. Instantly those that were on the wing began skeltering in headlong flight through the foliage of the trees towards some safer roosting-place, and the few that were perched, sprang up, flapping and shrieking, and following with all speed the example of their fellows. Even the chicken was forgotten in the hurry of the moment.

"Let the bone of contention lie under the tree, and if we don't notice them some will be back shortly," said the Ameer. "Take Khairu into the tent and hide the bows."

The veteran falconer was right. About ten minutes afterwards an old crow was descried

sneaking behind the plantation, and silently taking up a position in the thickest cover he could find. Then came a second and a third; at last we were aware of the presence of a dozen.

"Bring the bird," whispered the Ameer.

The Bazdar* came softly out of the tent, carrying on his fist Khairu, the Laghar,† who was sitting erect, as if mentally prepared for anything, with head pressed forward, and pounces‡ firmly grasping the Dasti.§ Her hood was then removed, her leash was slowly slipped, and as one crow bolder than the others lit furtively upon the ground, where the half-plucked chicken lay, Khairu, cast off with a whoop, dashed unhesitatingly at the enemy.

Another tumult. Every Beloch, that could handle a bow, provided himself with one, and all of us hurried to the open space whence we could descry the evolutions of the birds.

At the sight of the hawk, the crow precipi-

* Falconer.

† Laghar, a large kind of hobby-hawk. See Chapter II.

‡ The "pounces," in the language of falconry, are the bird's talons.

§ Oriental falconers, instead of a glove, use a small square napkin of wadded cotton, secured to the wrist by a noose, and twisted round the hand so that the bird sitting on the forefinger may clench it with her talons. Another use of the "Dasti" will be explained afterwards.

tately dropped his prize, and shrieking as usual, skurried through the trees pursued by his stubborn foe.

Now all is excitement. The attendants rush about whooping and hallooing, in order if possible to frighten the quarry still more. Vainly the crow attempts to make a distant shelter, the Laghar hangs close upon him, gaining every moment. Corvus must shift his tactics. Now he attempts to take the air, wheeling in huge circles gradually contracted. But Khairu has already reached his level, another instant a swoop will end the scene. The crow falls, cunningly as might be expected; presenting his bill and claws he saves himself from the stoop, and having won, as he supposes, distance, cleverly turns over, and wriggles through the air towards his asylum. Already it is near,—a large clump of thorny mimosas, from whose rugged boughs resound the voices of a startled colony. Khairu, with a soldier's glance, perceives the critical moment, plies her pinions with redoubled force, grapples with her quarry from behind, weighs him down rapidly through the cleaving air, and nearing the earth, spreads her wings into parachute form, lighting with force scarcely sufficient to break an egg.

The battle is not finished. Corvus, in spite of

his fall, his terror, a rent in the region of the back, and several desperate pecks, still fights gallantly. This is the time for the falconer to assist his bird. From the neighbouring mimosas, roused by the cries of their wounded comrade, pours forth a "rabble rout" of crows, with noise and turmoil, wheeling over the hawk's head, and occasionally pouncing upon her, *unguibus et rostris*, with all the ferocity of hungry peregrines. We tremble for Khairu. Knowing her danger, we hurry on, as fast as our legs can carry us, shouting, shooting pellets, and anathematizing the crows. We arrive, but hardly in time. As we plunge through the last bushes which separate us from the hawk, twenty cawers rise flurriedly from the ground: the Bazdar hurries to his Laghar. The quarry lies stone dead, but poor Khairu, when taken up and inspected by thirty pair of eyes, is found to have lost her sight, and to be otherwise so grievously mauled, pecked, and clawed, that the most sanguine prepare themselves for her present decease.

Alas, poor Khairu!

"I never yet heard of good coming from these accursed Kang,"* said the Ameer as we slowly retraced our way towards the encampment; "one of them I am sure killed my poor brother at Meeanee. All the night a huge black crow sat

* A crow in the Scindee tongue.

upon the apple of his tent-pole, predicting the direst disasters to him. We drove away the beast of ill-omen half a dozen times, still he would return."

"Yet," Kakoo Mall ventured to observe, "the crow of the wild, the *Ghurab el bain*, is frequently commended by the poets as a Mujarrad,* and even they make him their messenger when sending a mental missive to those they love."

"They are asses, and sons of asses! and thou, O Kakoo! art the crow of all the Kafirs!" responded Meer Ibrahim Khan, angrily: "have not these, thy kinsfolk, killed Khairu, the Laghar?

* One detached from the pomps and vanities, &c.

CHAPTER II.

THE HAWKS USED IN SCINDE.

THE following are the principal varieties of birds generally known to the Scindian falconer.

1. The Shahbaz, or hawk-king, a large grey goshawk with yellow eyes, caught in the hills of Affghanistan and its surrounding regions, brought down to the plains and sold, when well reclaimed, trained, and in good condition, for 5*l.* or 6*l.* The tiercelet or male, is, as usual, much smaller than the female, and is called Jurrah, in Persian "the active." Both are uncommonly strong and ferocious. They are accounted the noblest birds; the Sher-baz ("lion-hawk") or peregrine of Bokhara and the snowy regions, being all but unknown here.

2. The Bahri (Bhairi) or *Falco calidus*, so celebrated amongst Indian falconers for her boldness and power, and her tiercel, here vulgarly called the Shahin, are found in some parts of the province. They fly at partridges, hares, bustards,

curlews, herons and the Saras;* being long-winged hawks or birds "of the lure,"† they are taught to fly high, to "wait on"‡ the falconer, and to "make the point."§

3. The Bashah, a kind of sparrow-hawk, and her mate the Bashin, a small, short-winged, low-flying bird with yellow eyes and dark plumage in her first year, which afterwards changes to a light ash colour, marked with large grey bars, are very much valued here on account of the rapid way in which they fill the pot, especially with partridges. As they remain in Scinde during the cold weather, and retire in summer to the hills around, those trained are "passage hawks," or "birds of the year;"|| their low price, 8*s.* or 10*s.*, makes it scarcely worth while to mew¶ them, so

* The Indian crane, a splendid bird, sometimes standing six feet high.

† Hawks are of two kind:—1st. birds of the lure, or the long-winged: 2nd. birds of the fist (because they fly from thence instead of swooping from the air), or the round-winged.

‡ The perfection of a falcon in Europe is that her pitch be as high, her range as far, and her swoop as perpendicular as possible. To "wait on" the falconer is to follow him (in the air) wherever he pleases.

§ See Chapter III.

|| The passage-hawks, or birds of the year, are those caught (full grown) in nets and traps at the period of migration; opposed to the "eyesses," or those taken from the nest.

¶ To "mew" a falcon is to keep her in a state of captivity

they are let loose when the moulting season commences.

4. The Shikrah and her tiercel the Chipak are our common English sparrow-hawks. They are flown at partridges, and by their swiftness and agility afford tolerable sport. At the same time they are opprobriously called "dog-birds" by the falconer on account of their ignoble qualities, their want of staunchness and their habit of carrying the game. They may be bought ready trained, in most parts of Scinde, for a shilling or two.

5. The Laghar, or hobby, and her mate the Jaghar. This is the only long-winged hawk generally used in the country; she is large, and black-eyed* with yellow legs, black claws and a tail of a cinereous white colour. She is a native of Scinde, moults during the hot months from April to October, and builds in ruined walls and old mimosa trees. The Laghar is flown at quail, partridge, curlew, bastard-bustard and hares; the best sport is undoubtedly afforded by crows, only

whilst she moults. Thus she becomes an "intermewed" bird; opposed to a "haggard"—a wild hawk after the first year.

* Generally the Siyah-chashm, or black-eyed birds, are the long-winged and noble order; the Gulabi-chashm, or yellow-eyed, belong to the round-winged or ignoble.

she is addicted to carrying* the quarry, and is very likely to be killed by her angry enemies.

The late Sir Alexander Burnes in the 2nd Chapter of his "Personal Narrative of a Journey to Cabool," gives the following list of falcons and hawks known to the Scindians.

Luggur (Laghar) female. Juggur (Jaghar) male.	Native of Scinde, a large *sparrow-hawk*, with dark eye, trained for the season, and then let loose.
Baz (Shahbaz) female. Zorru (Jurrah) male.	Native of Khorasan, goolab (yellow) eye; a noble bird.
Churgh, female. Churghela (Charghlo) male.	Native of Cuthee, black-eyed; fastens on the antelope, and kills the "tuloor."†
Bashu (Bashah) female. Bisheen (Bashin)‡ male.	Native of Khorasan, goolab eye, small.
Bahree (Bahri) female. Bahree-buchee (Shahin) male.	Natives of Scinde, found near the Indus, and not prized.§
Kohee, female. Koheela, male.	Also called Shaheen,‖ natives of Scinde, black-eyed.

* The technical word for walking off with the wounded bird.

† A kind of a floriken.

‡ "Bashin" is a feminine form of Bashah, and yet popularly applied to the tiercel, or male bird.

§ This proves that the lamented author wrote from hearsay: the Bahri is a noble bird, as every Indian falconer knows. Some erroneously consider it a variety of the jer-falcon.

‖ In Scinde, the word Shahin is improperly applied to

Tooruratee,* female. Chatway (Chatua) male.	Natives of Scinde, black eyes; let loose after the season.†
Shikrah, female. Chipak, male.	Natives of Scinde; goolab eye.

Our old falconers, like the Orientals, had different names for the birds of the different sexes. For instance

The female was called a	Falcon,	the male a	Tiercel.‡
„ „	Goshawk	„	Tiercelet.

---

the tiercel of the Bahri. The best authorities believe it to be synonymous with Kohi (Kohee), a kind of jer, or Barbary falcon.

* This must be an error of print for Turmati.

† A small bird with naked yellow legs, and a bill of the same colour, in fact the common kestrel of England. With respect to the kestrel two errors are prevalent. In the first place it is generally considered an ignoble bird, although a regular falcon (*Falco tinnunculus*),—the second feather of the wing being the longest, independent of other characteristics,—and a congener to the noble peregrine. Secondly, she is supposed to be quite useless to the falconer, as "it will take little or nothing in the air beyond a butterfly." Some "doubt the practicability of training it." Others do not believe "that a kestrel can be taught to fly at any wild bird, however small," and never succeeded in making it do more than take a young sparrow or blackbird let loose from the hand. In the East, the kestrel is rather a favourite with the Bazdar, and there is no reason why she should not be as much honoured in the West.

‡ Tassel, or tiercel, so called in the language of falconry, because one-third smaller than the female bird.

The female was called a	Jer-falcon	the male a	Jerkin.
„ „	Merlin	„	Jack.
„ „	Hobby	„	Robbin.
„ „	Sparrow-hawk	„	Musket.
„ „	Lanner	„	Lanneret.

There is a great difference, here as elsewhere, between the properties of the long-winged falcons and the short-winged hawks. The former have ever been the general favourites in Europe, on account of their docility, ardour, and perseverance. These "denizens of the cloud and crag," swoop from the air upon the quarry with the rapidity of lightning, and fell it to earth with a single stroke of their powerful avillons, or hind-talons, slantingly delivered from behind, so as to lay open the shoulders and loins, the back of the neck, or the skull. Of this order is the peregrine, the "Sacer ales," who "deserveth no meaner a title than Jove's servant," and to her, as the type of the race, falconry profusely gives every attribute of nobility. The short-winged birds pursue the game in a horizontal line with considerable rapidity; truss* it, kill it

* The long-winged bird requires to soar high before she can put forth her full powers of flight, and when she misses her swoop, she must gyrate upwards before a second onset. She finds a difficulty in working directly up hill, but strikes her quarry when descending with the rapidity of an arrow. The short-winged hawk "trusses" her prey, raising it aloft and descending rapidly with it to the ground.

by force of wing and strength used at random, hold it under the feet,* and proceed immediately to tire† and plume it.

The round-winged hawks are principally used in Scinde, although by far the more expensive to purchase, reclaim, and keep. Either the climate, or the system of training,‡ or both combined, is decidedly in their favour. I doubt whether *falco gentilis* § in the West ever gave better sport than does one of Ibrahim Khan's favourite goshawks.

* The French falconers used the word *lier* (to bind) of falcons, as they touch the prey first with their talons; *empiéter* (to trample) of hawks, as they hold the game down under foot.

† To "tire" is to pull at the quarry: to "plume" is to strip off its feathers.

‡ Proper training doubtlessly increases the energy and ferocity of the hawk, by teaching her to attack, and showing her that she can master birds and animals, at which, in her wild state, she would probably never attempt to fly. In Chapter VI., I have described the way in which the eastern falconer, by means of live lures, provides his bird with spirit and confidence in her powers.

§ Or peregrinus, the "gentle" (noble), or peregrine falcon of European celebrity.

CHAPTER III.

A DAY WITH THE SHIKRAH.

The Shikrah, or sparrow-hawk, is much praised by some of our old authors on falconry. "She serveth," says one of them, "for winter and summer, with great pleasure." Another declares that "she will fly at all kinds of game more than the falcon." Even the moderns commend her activity and spirit when making her dash,* and remark the rapidity of her flight for short distances. At the same time they justly enough give her scant credit for power of endurance, and blame her for uncertainty in the field, ill temper on the perch, and a timidity as well as an uncertainty of disposition.

The training of the Shikrah here, as in Europe, is a work of peculiar difficulty. "He who can reclaim, man, and fly with, the sparrow-hawk,"

* The Scindian, like the English sparrow-hawk, preys entirely upon birds. She flies exactly like the goshawk,—low, and frequently takes advantage of a shelter to fall unexpectedly upon her quarry.

says a prime authority, "may easily attain the keeping and managing of all other birds." They are deficient both in temper and character, and their constitutional delicacy renders their education anything but a labour of love. Every falconer knows how violently they will bait when first placed upon the fist;* with what ill grace they learn to endure the hood;† and how often when "summed,"‡ as well as unsummed, they fall victims to an incurable disease—the cramp. At the same time they are to be managed by skilful training, and much *sang froid*. Sebright tells us that he once caught a wild partridge with a sparrow-hawk of his own breaking, ten days after she had been taken from a wood. On the other hand, a friend of mine attempted to tame one for weeks, quite to no purpose, and at last dashed her brains out, because she revenged herself upon her jailer by digging her talons into his fingers.

* * * * *

Already the cold grey light of the eastern sky

* So much so that those ignorant of the sparrow-hawk's peculiarities generally fancy that her legs have received some injury from the fury of her struggles in the leash.

† Western falconers prefer to keep the sparrow-hawk unhooded. This is never done in Scinde; and the reason of the European treatment is by no means apparent.

‡ A "summed" hawk is one whose feathers are full grown.

was beginning to gain upon the waning moon-beams, when the Ameer, true to his appointment, rode up to my tent and shouted that it was time to be stirring.

Hawking being the sport which, after thieving, the Beloch most loves, a large cavalcade of friends and neighbours had assembled to enjoy the pleasures of the field.

Every man was mounted on his best mare. Caps, coats, and trousers of Lincoln and other greens, embroidered here and there with gold, were evidently "the thing:" even the falconers running about with their birds on their fists, and the more than half-naked beaters carrying long poles over their shoulders, had adhered to the prevailing fashion as strictly as they could. All the birds were of the Shikrah kind, it being understood that we were out for a "*tittar*"* *battue*. The Ameer carried on his wrist a noble Shahbaz, for show rather than for use. When he dismounted to exchange the usual salutations, the bird was handed over to the grand Bazdar, who returned with her to the palace; as if her presence at a partridge hunt would have been derogatory to the dignity of her race.

"Wallah, you have shown cunning," quoth

* Partridge, generally the grey kind, little prized in this country, because they feed on the roads, not in the stubble.

GOING TO COVER

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the Ameer, looking at the tall cylindrical cap I was wearing, instead of the usual turban: "nothing a hawk hates so much as a 'mullah's '* head-gear, except, perhaps—except—"

"What?" I inquired, guessing the reason of the hesitation.

"Except the great things like ladles† which you Sahibs wear on your heads. The other day I rode out hawking with an officer, who did me the honour of visiting my poor village. He came all in white, face and everything, just like a corpse. Saving your presence, he had no beard, and many an old woman (I am not offending you?) in my village has mustachios larger than his. I could not refuse him the use of my best Shahbaz, although it was evident that his fingers were more accustomed to a pen than to a hawk. As long as the bird was hooded all went well; but when she gained her sight, she could no more support what she saw, than I the looks of the Div Sapid.‡ She baited§ every moment;

* The turban is the clerical hat.

† By which comparison the Ameer attempted to describe the leather jockey-cap with the long visor, then extensively used by the Anglo-Scindian.

‡ The white fiend, a celebrated goblin in Firdausi's Epic, the Shah Nameh.

§ The technical term for the hawk's struggling to rise from the wrist or fist.

the Sahib would not slip the leash; my poor goshawk hung like a slaughtered fowl over a boor's arm—to this day I do not think her legs have quite recovered the shock. You know," pursued my garrulous companion, "the only way to secure the little affection a hawk has, is never to startle, never to frighten her.* She remembers kindness to a certain extent, recognizes her servant, and shows pleasure in the society of those she loves.† But she never forgets or forgives the hand that hurts her, even by accident. But you, Sahib," concluded the Ameer, "hold your hawk just like a Beloch; and you look a very Sayyid. You must be a Moslem! Come, Wallah! confess have you not been—"

* * * * *

In the mean time our ambling nags had carried us rapidly down the dry, silty, bush-grown bed of the Rain River, till passing the parts where the banks were split with deep canal heads, and bordered by fields and huts, we reached a promising bit of country. Far as vision extended stretched a plain of hard, dry

* Had the Ameer been a European, or had he known a little more of Europeans, he would have added emphatically, "never to lose temper with her."

† Our author-falconers notably err when they assert that hawks are not susceptible of attachment to their keeper. The bird is not an affectionate one, but it has affection.

earth, planted with lines of Euphorbia, like gigantic cabbages, and bare brambles of bright green Capparis. Few and far between, tall broom-shaped Mimosas, and the little settlements of the Ryots gathering about them the morning mists, afforded the eye a resting-place. The sun was rising over the purple horizon with a promise of warmth infinitely grateful to our cavalcade; many a chocolate-coloured face was slaty to look at by reason of the cold. The morning breeze, though fresh, could scarcely be called a wind;* in fact, every condition appeared most favourable to our purposed sport.

"Here we must dismount," quoth the Ameer.

Each man sprang from his horse, and all who had hawks with them took them from the falconers, loosened the hunting knives in their belts, and forming a line behind the beaters, advanced over the plain. The shouts† and heavy blows of the long staves upon the bushes, soon raised a covey of grey partridge, and one of the birds, separated by skilful management from the rest, took refuge in a solitary bunch of wild caper.

* All varieties of the sparrow-hawk find it difficult to fly when there is the least wind.

† As a general rule, shouting should be avoided, because it scares the bird. Here, however, hawks are so much accustomed to the loudest sounds of the human voice, that noise soon ceases to alarm them.

"It is for you, Sahib," said Ibrahim Khan, politely, pointing to the place of refuge, as the beaters, having done their duty, slunk out of the way.

After an immense waste of ceremony—it would have been unsportsmanlike in the extreme to have clenched the offer—I prepared to open the day's work. My native friends all stood watching me with critical eyes, so that not to *scomparire* before them, required all the cunning in the "noble art" I possessed.

After slipping the knot that held the jesses to the leash, I gently "unstruck"* my Shikrah's hood, pulled it off, and turning her from me—our short acquaintance forbade any familiarity—with the fingers of the left hand clasping her back and wings, I raised her from my fist so tenderly, that the thought of kicking or struggling never seemed to come across her mind. Then jerking the wadded cotton napkin from its old position into the palm of the right hand, I placed the little savage flat upon it and secured her body within the grasp, her head and tail protruding at either extremity. This delicate operation was successfully performed, not a feather of her plumage being ruffled:—looks of abundant approbation told me as much.

* To "unstrike" the hood is to draw its strings so as to prepare it for being removed.

Then walking up to within twenty yards of the bush I motioned the assistant falconer to flush the partridge. It rose steadily and strongly. The moment I saw the quarry hastening away in the accustomed straight line, raising my right hand, with care, however, not to tighten the grasp, I "shied" my bird after it as Lilly does a cricket ball.*

The sparrow-hawk, as has been said, is a sharp active flyer for short distances. In less than a minute loud cries of "Laga, Laga!"† resounded from behind me as the two birds, victor and victim, rapidly descended with outspread wings. Another delicate operation was to come, and the company hurried up to see it performed.

The Shikrah, when I caught sight of her, was holding down her quarry, and concealing it with her outspread wings from view, now fiercely glancing around her, now eagerly pecking at its head and body. Stooping low and ejaculating the "Ao Bacheh!"‡ as though I loved her, I approached, knelt down to her, put forth my

* I must be allowed particularly to recommend this Oriental way of casting off small hawks to the attention of the European falconer.

† "Hit!" "hit!" or "wounded."

‡ "Come, my child!" an endearing address to which the hawk is made familiar.

left hand and turning the dying bird upon its back, drew my knife across its throat with the usual religious formula.* Then as the hawk still held firm, I thrust the point of the dagger into the partridge's tongue, and splitting the head open, gave the Shikrah her due, the brain. Lastly, one flight being enough for that day, I gorged her with the heart, breast, and the other parts to which she took a fancy, gently pulled her off the pelf,† feaked‡ and hooded her, tied the leash to the jesses,§ handed her to the falconer, and stood up to receive no small quantity of "butter" from the rest of the "hunt."

The Ameer then took the field with the usual success. There is little or no excitement in hawking grey partridge hereabouts, as the quarry scarcely ever escapes. When the bird mounts, the hawk rakes along after it, and if the flight be a

* Good Moslems never take the life of an animal without acknowledging that they do it in the name of Allah.

† The "pelf" is what the hawk leaves of her quarry.

‡ To "feak" is to wipe the hawk's beak.

§ The "jesses" are two narrow pointed thongs of soft, light, and well-greased leather, made fast to the hawk's legs, close above the toes. In the East they are connected by a loose slip-knot to the leash or strap, which in the field goes round the falconer's neck ; it is cast off when the bird is to fly, and the jesses are twined about the fingers. In Europe a swivel attaches them to the leash.

direct one, she is seen to catch it within a minute. Sometimes, however, in bushy ground the partridge succeeds in creeping under a thorn, and the Shikrah, unable to follow it by reason of her jesses, either "makes her point"* and takes her stand on some neighbouring tree or eminence, or she sits on the ground with her eye fiercely fixed upon her prey till the beater kicks it up again. In this way I have seen a single partridge give tolerable sport for half an hour; generally, however, it is tame work in the extreme.

The "Karo-tittar"† affords much more amusement than his grey congener. The former is a larger and a heavier bird than the variety common in Europe; the female resembles the cock grouse; the male is a remarkably fine bird with strong game plumage, a jet black neck, and a breast of the same colour, only that on every feather is a milk white spot the size of a small bead. They are fond of grounds where there is plenty of copse and cover, fly with considerable power, and show no little craft in attempting to escape the enemy. Hawks are sometimes seriously injured by blows from the long, sharp spurs of the black partridge when struggling in the agonies of death.

* That is to say, marks with precision the spot in which the quarry has taken refuge by towering in the air.

† The black partridge.

"Look at the Pippal! look at the Pippal!"* whispered the under-falconer, a tall, black, ill-visaged Scindian,† to his master. The Ameer directed my eye towards the spot, but for the life of me, I could see nothing save a tall, thick tree whose shining leaves glistened brightly like little mirrors in the sunbeams.

"Give me thy Shikrah," said the Ameer to the dark, lean, frowning nephew who was standing on his left hand, "thou hast not yet flown her; I will try her at one of these pigeons."

The first stick which struck the lofty Peepul started a colony of large green birds that had been hanging to the branches and boughs by their legs like so many paroquets. A few remained behind, and of these, one was destined to be the victim.

"Another stick at the tree—pitch it high up," whispered Ibrahim Khan to the Bazdar, poising his hawk ready to be thrown at the quarry.

A pair of pigeons hustled out of the Peepul,

* The *Ficus religiosa*, so called because it is occupied by one of the Hindoo Triad, and connected by the natives of India with a hundred religious or superstitious ideas.

† The "grand falconer" is generally a Beloch, as being the most respectable man one can find in these regions. The popular fancy is, that hawks strongly object to be handled by low caste, drunken fellows; doubtless there is a substratum of reason for their prejudice against such servants.

shaping their course through the open air so as to give a magnificent flight. In an instant the Shikrah was thrown at them, and all the lookers on hastened out of the way of the tree, to enjoy the sport and be ready to assist the bird.

Unfortunately, however, for the hawk and my friend's temper, she had not been "sharp set"* that morning. This at once became apparent from her manœuvres. Instead of grappling with the quarry, she "checked"† first at one bird, then at the other, amused herself with following them on the wing, and lastly, when tired of the unprofitable exercise, she "raked off,"‡ and retiring to one of the Peepul branches, took up a position there with such firmness of purpose that all the falconer's "Ao Bachchs" and violent swingings of the lure were unavailing to dislodge her.

The Ameer's brow clouded: certain angry flashes escaped his eyes, and low growlings threatened an approaching storm. For a Beloch to make such a goose of himself! Every one stole furtive glances at the blunderer, the lean nephew; and even he, despite his habitual surliness of demeanour, could not help showing in looks and

* That is to say in hunting condition—hungry.

† To "check" is to forsake the quarry, and fly at any chance bird that crosses the path.

‡ To "rake" is to fly low like an owl; to "rake off" is to abandon the pursuit of the game.

manner that conscience was stirring up uncomfortable sensations within him.

"Give me the bow," shouted the Ameer in his fury, "and let me do for that brother-in-law of a bit of carrion at once."

The Bazdar wishing, but not daring to deprecate such an atrocious act of sacrilege as the shooting of a hawk, slowly handed a polished horn *kaman** to his master and a *tako* or blunt arrow shod with a bit of horn. The Scindians are particularly expert at the use of this weapon; they throw the missile transversely so as to strike with the side, and when a large covey is the mark aimed at, they sometimes bring down as many as three or four birds with a pair of shafts. So it happened that the Shikrah, who was quietly "mantling"† upon a clear branch in a nice sunny place, had the life summarily knocked out of her by the Ameer's *tako*.

Leaving the awe-struck crowd to gather round the corpse and to remove its jesses, Ibrahim Khan, sobered by this frightful outburst of wrath and revenge, followed by his Bazdar, strode sullenly on, till his followers chose to rejoin him.

* A bow; those of Mooltan, made of two buffalo horns, joined at the base, are admirable weapons.

† The hawk "mantles" when she stretches her wings successively after her legs behind her.

After the murderous act above detailed, nothing seemed to prosper. Twice a covey of partridges rose and the Shikrah was sent in full pursuit, when a second hawk was inadvertently slipped, so that the danger of their "crabbing"* became imminent. And the quantity of cursing that accompanied these mishaps, instead of acting *more Europeo* as a sedative upon the cursers, exercised, as it usually does upon the Asiatic mind, all the proper functions of a stimulant.

"The beasts have now brayed their full," whispered Hari Chand in my ear; "another minute and the kicking will begin. Are they not Belochies? With your Highness's permission I would remain at a certain distance, for these asses' foals never mind what they assault in their skittishness, provided that they can find some employment for their heels."

Resisting my valorous Moonshee's proposal to "pad the hoof," I determined to act as a "friend of order," and, thanks to study of the native character, my benevolent efforts were crowned with success. Whilst the Ameer, too sullen to interfere, stood looking on apparently in hope of a row, I walked up, compelling Hari Chand to follow me, and, selecting the weaker party, began to "tell them of their faults" as the members of

* When two hawks fight they are said to "crab."

high-spirited English families love to do, that is to say, to overwhelm them with pointed and personal abuse. The tone of voice, a gruff base, like the *basso cantante* of an orchestra, withdrew attention from the rattling treble of the vocalization around. Mammu ceased to scream at Fauju; Mammed* forebore to reproach Ali with the *sept péchés mortels*, and Umar contented himself with internally yearning, instead of openly praying for, sudden death to descend upon the head of Babbur. And when to put the colophon upon my diversionary movement, after the example of our great lexicographer, I concluded my harangue with the emission of a few most inappropriate, unintelligible, and villanous sounding Arabic words, a spell seemed to have fallen upon the mob; where anger was, blankness appeared; where spite reigned, puzzle ascended the throne, and men began to chew the cud of indigestible thought.

The old schoolday lines—

> Ac veluti magno in populo quum sæpe coorta est
> Seditio, sævitque animis ignobile vulgus * * *
> Tum pietate gravem ac meritis si forte virum quem
> Conspexêre, silent, arrectisque auribus adstant,

rose up before my mind. A "let us move on,

* The vulgar Scinde way of pronouncing "Mohammed" —the George or John of the unchristian world.

base-borns! is this the way the Beloch hunts?" finally restored the *status quo* of things.

* * * * *

The afternoon sun brought up with it a keen, searching wind, a sign that, for the time, hawking must end. We restored our birds to the falconers, mounted our snorting horses, and turned their heads towards Meer Ibrahim Khan Talpur's village.

* * * * *

"I never pass one of these devil's chicks without a shot at him," said my friend, reining in his mare, and unslinging the bow from his back for the benefit of a monstrous Ukab* who was sunning his foul plumage upon a bit of open ground near the bleached skeleton of some long-since departed camel.

The aim was a good one, not so the distance. The reed arrow rattled against the ugly brute's iron pinions stingingly but harmlessly, as the fist of the "British pugilist" upon the ribs of his brother when in particularly good training. Not caring, however, for a repetition of the compliment, the vulture ran forward a few steps, stooped, sprang up, extending his long pinions, and rose from the ground, slowly flapping his

* The "Ukab," or Scinde vulture, is a mortal enemy to every species of hawk.

wings at first, till, feeling himself fairly in the air, he soared majestically towards his accustomed resting-place, the clouds, or rather where the clouds should be.

I inquired the occasion on which the whole race of Ukab had drawn down upon itself the fire of Ibrahim Khan Talpur's indignation.

"Once," replied the Ameer, "I had a magnificent Bahri, the noblest animal that ever met falconer's eye. I flew her at everything; she had spirit enough to attack a wild ass. Never was there a finer sight than a struggle between her and the Saras."

Here the Ameer began violent gesticulations.

"Ha! there they went (wheeling his finger round his head) the crane heavily flapping, then shooting up perpendicularly as an arrow, and the hawk circling after her, narrowing the sweep, and following the quarry with the eye of a greyhound.* Now the Saras is tired out; she can rise no more; the Bahri is on a level with her. Ha! she screams; the hawk is above her; Ajal† within an instant of her. Again she shrieks shrilly; she knows that the swoop is coming, her only chance

* Grey-hounds in this country hunt almost entirely by the sight.

† "Sudden death"—a common word in a Moslem's mouth, especially when speaking of an enemy.

is to face the foe with her sharp stout beak. Now the Bahri stoops; the crane has escaped this once, by bending back her neck; the falcon must tire her out with twenty sham attacks. Between fright and fatigue the Saras can scarcely move. At least the Bahri holds her, blinding her with the talons; they tumble through the air; they spread out their wings as they reach the earth. It was a splendid sight!"

"Well, Sahib," continued the Ameer, speaking by jerks, as his breathlessness allowed him; "one day I flew my beautiful Bahri after a little heron which we all expected to see killed in a moment. They took the air well together, when, of a sudden, 'see the Ukab! oh, the Ukab!' cried the Bazdar. True enough! High above us was the wretch, a black dot in the blue sky, looking out like an Affghan, for what he could plunder. We shouted—we waved the lure: unfortunately my poor Bahri was so eager after her quarry, that nothing could tempt her out of the way of destruction. Then the Ukab disappeared from our eyes, and we thought that the Maloon* had been frightened by our noise. The falcon and the little heron kept rising and rising, till we lost sight of them also. Presently, by the Prophet's beard I swear to you, Sahib, as we stood looking upwards with straining eyes,

* The "cursed."

a speck appeared like a fly in the air, larger and larger it grew, the instant after, plump fell a body at our feet. It was poor Solmi my falcon. The accursed vulture had shattered her skull with his foul beak. And since that day I have liberally dispensed Kisas* to all his breed."

* * * * *

On our way home the Ameer put countless questions about falconry in England, and many were his *wah wahs* of astonishment to hear that the noble craft was all but extinct amongst us. Unwilling, however, that he should think our slackness the result of ignorance, I borrowed as much as I could remember from "black letter authority," described in rude Scindee a few of the hawking scenes that used to be, and by no means neglected to dwell upon the various refinements of our western falconers, such as the block,† the cage,‡ and the practice of hawking with well trained dogs.

* The *lex talionis*, described by Mohammed the Prophet as the very vitality of his amiable faith.

† Short-winged and passage hawks are mewed on a perch; the long-winged on a block, a truncated cone of solid wood about a foot high, with a small staple on the top as a resting place for the bird, and a broad base to prevent her overturning it.

‡ The cage is an oblong frame of wood, in the middle of which the falconer places himself, with his birds tied to the sides and ends, so that one man may carry a number of them.

About this latter point Ibrahim Khan was particularly curious, and great was his delight to hear my description of a day's work with good pointers; the hawk waiting on the falconer high in the air, and the dogs standing motionless, looking alternately in front and above them. Then the flushing of the game, the pursuit of it by its feathered and four-footed foes; the exciting run, the swoop, and the pleasant sight of the pointers, marking where the quarry fell.

"But how is it, Meer Sain,"* I inquired, "that the Beloch, with all his fondness for falconry, never dreamed of such a Hikmat† as the use of pointers?"

"Hor! hor! hor!" responded the Ameer, restored to full good humour by the prospect of what is commonly called "selling," the self-sufficient Frank: "Do you create the dogs? I shall be most happy to use them."

The form of the reply was not a strange one to me.

A committee of grave, serious, and earnest gentlemen, bent upon the conversion of heathenry from the error of its ways, met once upon a time

* Sain, in Scinde, is equivalent to the Indian "Sahib," the English "Sir."

† "Hikmat" is a word generally used for a contrivance, an art, an act of diplomacy, cunning, &c.

at Ootacamund, the Baden-Baden of Southern or Madras India. And after much fervent discussion, it was unanimously determined that in order to lay the evil spirit of Hindooism for ever, the book of Butler—the "Analogy of Religion"—should be translated into the Tamul or vernacular tongue, printed and generally diffused among the "pagan-castes"—as they call themselves—of the Benighted Land.

The gentleman, upon whose shoulders the onus of the work had, by universal consent, been placed, was unfortunately for the project, a sober, solid, matter-of-fact, German missionary. He took some time to tell over the pros and cons of the case, but his opinion when given was a valuable one.

"I like fery well vat you brobose, gentlemen, only I have von difficulty; vat is the Tamul word for 'analogie?'"

It is almost unnecessary to say that the committee of earnest gentlemen, not being able to create Tamul for the Missionary's use, were compelled reluctantly to defer for a while the destruction of Hindooism in Southern India.

CHAPTER IV.

RECLAIMING AND MANNING THE HAWK IN SCINDE.

Hawks, in Scinde as elsewhere, are of two kinds, the "eyess" (or nyess),* and the "passage-bird."

The eyess or nestling is treated much the same way here as in Europe. It is taken from the parents as soon as fully fledged, and placed in a

* The "eyess" is the bird taken from the eyerie: also called the "nyess," in old French *oyseau niais* or *faucon royal*. When it has left the nest it becomes a "brancher:" a "soar-hawk," or "soarage," when it has begun to prey for itself. Birds of the first year are called "red hawks," on account of the colour of their plumage, which afterwards changes most deceptively to the ornithologist. In the second year they become "mewed hawks," in the third "white hawks," in the fourth "hawks of the first coat."

These are technical terms in European falconry. The Scindees have only two names in popular use,—the "Chooz," or young bird (the "hawk of the year"), and the "tarinak," or intermewed hawk; but to the lover of oriental technicalities the perusal of a Persian treatise on falconry will afford as acute gratification as the study of "Hieracosophion sive de Re Accipitraria," or the "Boke of St. Albans," to the European student of things mediæval.

large, light room* opening to the south, with windows latticed to keep out cats, and sods of turf spread upon the floor. The bird must invariably be fed from the hand, to the sound of a peculiar whistle; a plentiful meal twice a-day, morning and evening, is absolutely necessary at this stage of the treatment.† The usual food is goat's meat, from which the skin and fat have been removed: sometimes the young birds are indulged in such delicacies as pigeons, fowls, and the flesh of kittens; and the skin of a bird, with the feathers on, is given to them whenever deemed advisable. During the whole of this time the falconer ‡

* In Europe the open air is preferred. Sebright advises the falconer to place his eyesses in a "hamper firmly fixed upon its side, about breast high, on the branches of a tree, in a retired situation." The objection to this plan is, that the birds when taken up are as wild as passage-hawks.

† Otherwise the plumage will bear what is called "hunger-traces," a flaw on the shaft and web of every feather in the body, especially the wings and tail, often occasioning them to break off at the place injured.

‡ A good Bazdar loves and takes the greatest pride in his birds. His temper must be such that he can endure disappointment without showing anger; hawks never forget the least injury or ill-usage. His voice must be sweet and clear as a bell; the falcon fears and hates a shrill, harsh, or loud cry. Without cleanliness he will never win the affection of his charges; their olfactory powers are wonderful, and their dislike to strong-smelling articles, as garlic, &c., is excessive. The expert falconer knows how long his birds relish a particular

sedulously cultivates their acquaintance, makes them familiar with his voice and appearance, accustoms them to follow and approach him, without however handling them more than necessary, and carefully observes their quality, mettle, and disposition.* He supplies them with boughs of trees to perch on, spreads clean gravel on the turf, places a tub for them to bathe in, and attends regularly every day to the different signs of health and disease.†

Young hawks grow quickly; as soon as they begin to fly strongly they must be taken from hack.‡ Then their education commences in

food, and through their stomachs he finds his way to their hearts. In addition to these qualifications, he must be a clean limbed active fellow, a good runner, and willing to endure fatigue.

* Hawks differ greatly in strength and spirit; in the same brood there is sure to be one which surpasses all the others. The best sign is when a bird begins to fly early, shows a bold disposition, and at the same time displays more tractability than his fellows. Haggards are the most "curious," that is to say, shy and fearful, they learn with difficulty, and are moreover deficient in courage.

† Two points must principally be considered. First, the crop, which should be full and firm after feeding, with the food in a mass not in bunches. Secondly, the mutings: these ought to be white and clean;—blue and yellow being bad signs. A red tongue and bright eyes are also tokens of strong health.

‡ The "hack" is the place where meat is laid. Eyesses

earnest; eyesses are not seeled like haggards and birds of passage; their reclaiming commences with being broken to the hood.

A good Bazdar is always provided with an abundance of gins, snares, and the other instruments of *Aucceptologie*. He begins by observing the hawk he proposes to catch as she sits upright keeping guard upon the branch of some withered tree, over her domain the Jheel,* and watching the troops of ducks, snipe, and paddy birds, that flock there for food and sport. He prefers the young hawks of the first year, just after they have begun preying, and judges of their age by the colour of the plumage.† After a careful reconnoitre he lays his snare, a circle of running loops of strong gut, fastened to bamboo pins firmly planted in the ground. In the centre is the bait,—a live pigeon,‡ loosely tied

are said to be "kept at hack" when in this preparatory state of half liberty.

* A small lake.

† The young ones are dark and red: the feathers become lighter at each succeeding moult, especially on the backs of old birds. There are, besides these, other peculiar differences in the plumage, which at once attract the falconer's well trained eye.

‡ In India, as in Scinde, a pigeon is generally the bait for falcons or long-winged hawks, a quail for the small short-winged birds.

to a low perch: attached to its leg is a long string which the falconer from his place of concealment jerks, to attract the eye of the hawk. Presently she rises from her perch, perhaps takes the air a little, and then swoops at the fluttering captive, catching, by the action, her legs, wings, or neck, in the loops, which draw close and secure her. The Bazdar allows her to struggle for a while till completely entangled, he then approaches and takes her up, carefully preserving his fist from her weapons, and her feathers from suffering by her frantic endeavours to escape.

Then comes the operation of reclaiming the bird—one of the difficult parts of falconry. For the hawk must be tamed, and not cowed; so that a method that succeeds admirably with a clever high spirited "soarage," will often, to the mortification of the beginner, turn out a bird which, fearful of grappling with the quarry, returns currishly to his wrist.

The first step taken is to seel the hawk, which is done as follows. The Bazdar threads a small needle with fine silk, and firmly holding the bird's beak, runs it delicately through the outer rims of the inferior palpebræ. The ends of the strings are then knotted over the bird's head and drawn so tight that the lower closing over the upper eyelids effectually excludes the light of

day. This state must continue for a week, till the hawk ceases to "bait" when placed upon the fist. She is fed with strips of raw mutton or goats' flesh soaked in cold water for a time, proportioned to the strength of her digestion. If she refuses to feed, which is likely, her toes are pinched, and her legs are pulled, till she pecks at the hand: a bit of meat, which she is sure to swallow, may thus be introduced into her beak. Her castings* and mutings are attentively observed, and, in addition to her dose of cotton, she is occasionally purged with a half-penny-weight of sugar-candy and two cardamoms, to increase her hunger as well as to keep her stomach clean.

Immediately after seeling the bird, she is pro-

* Artificial castings are, as it were, emetics given to the hawk when she is supposed to be foul within, to clean her crop and increase her appetite. They are of two kinds: 1st. the feathers of a hen's wing; 2nd. pellets of fine soft cotton about the size of a large pill, conveyed into her gorge after supper. In the morning she throws them up, and the falconer judges from their appearance the state of his bird's health. If the pills are whitish, clean, hard, dry, and not offensive to the smell, he argues well of her crop: the contrary when discoloured, very wet, strong smelling, mixed with bits of undigested meat, or held together by mucus. Natural "castings" are oblong balls of the indigestible matter (fur and feathers which the bird has swallowed), thrown up after the meat is digested.

vided with her jesses, bells,* hood, and leash.† "Varvels" and "bewits"‡ are not used in this part of the eastern world.

When the captive is trained to sit quietly on the fist, the knot of the threads must be so loosed that she can see a little light. The hood is then put on, and care is taken to prevent the wearer indulging her propensity for pulling it off, by

* For the jesses and leash see Chapter III.

† Two little silver bells are generally fastened to the hawk's legs: the sound is supposed to please the bird, and it often prevents her being lost.

The hood is a cap of soft and thick hog-deer's hide, fitting the head closely but easily. About the neck it is provided with a string which runs readily in its holes, so that there may be no difficulty in drawing or loosing it. Amongst the rich this part of the hawk's "furniture" is ornamented with embroidery, handsome silver *aigrettes*, tassels, and other decorations. In Europe a "rufter hood" (chaperon de rustre)—a large wide cap, open behind—is put upon the hawk when she is first taken: here there is no such distinction.

The use of the hood at home is to keep the hawk quiet. As Sebright justly remarks, this artificial contrivance brings the bird nearer to her natural habits by inducing her to remain at rest, when not feeding or pursuing game, exactly as she would do in a wild state. In the field the hood prevents the hawk fluttering upon the fist every time that a bird rises with the risk of seriously injuring her arms.

‡ Varvels (vervelles) are little rings of metal,—upon which in Europe the name or the arms of the owner used to be engraved,—placed on a hawk's legs. Bewits are leathers and bells buttoned round the shank. In Scinde the bells are attached to the leg by means of the jesses.

diverting her attention whenever she attempts to free her head. A hole is pricked with a needle in the training hood, and the seeling threads are cut short, so that in time the stitches may of themselves fall from the eyelids.

The hawk is then placed upon the fist and broken to the hood, that is to say, taught to sit quiet whilst it is put on and taken off. At first she baits violently on the hand, as well as on the perch.* If her disposition be *méchante*, as the French falconers say, she is treated with great severity. She is constantly carried about, and stroked with a brush of feathers; her head is dipped in a tub; she is drenched by squeezing streams of water from a wet cloth, all down her back; during the day she is placed in the noisiest part of the house, she is fed only once in the twenty-four hours; and, in addition to this penance of Lenten fare, she is made to endure the agonies of "Shab-bidari."† This treatment

* It is as well to recollect that some soft substance as hay or a mattress placed beneath the perch or block of a newly caught hawk often saves a world of trouble in "imping" or repairing the long feathers of the wings and tail.

† Depriving of sleep, by placing candles round the patient at night, and by "stirring her up" with a stick whenever she seems disposed to be comfortable,—an infallible recipe for curing the ferocity of the wildest animals, from man downwards to the jungle-cock. Only it must be persevered in (with

is persevered in till she shows signs of taming —allowing the cap to be put on without motion, and quietly eating by day with eyes unveiled. If on the contrary her *naturel* be a pliant one, her wing is brailed* during the training hours, and at other times she is carried about on the fist. Every day the hole in her Topee† is enlarged, so as to admit more light; and as she improves in knowledge her meals are increased. The falconer now anxiously watches the progress of his bird, and rewards her readiness to be hooded with flattering words and a pill of meat. Generally in this part of the East he is assiduous and painstaking: in twenty days he reclaims and mans‡ his hawk so well, that she suffers her *chaperon* to be put on and removed without the least difficulty, and she may be carried through the bazar without once fluttering on the fist.

haggards sometimes as long as nine days), and at times death interferes to prevent the thorough success of the treatment.

* The "brail" in Scinde is simply a band of soft whit-leather fastened round one wing so as to confine it, and without hurting the bird, to make her feel that her powers of motion are considerably limited. Many hawks, however, are trained and broken to the hood without any instrument of the kind being used, and in all cases the sooner it is dispensed with the better.

† The cap or hood.

‡ A hawk is said to be "manned" when accustomed to the presence of mankind.

CHAPTER V.

A DAY WITH THE BASHAH.

"We have a long way to ride this morning, Sahib," said the Ameer, as I found myself on horseback at about 3 A.M.—"the hawks are gone on to the Haran Shikargah, the place where so much good had nearly happened to you." *

Having no birds to encumber us, we rode merrily on through the open country, wound down the canal courses, crossed the dry bed of many a river, and never drew rein till we reached a large town, Mohammed Khan's, on the Goonee.†

The approach to the place is pretty enough, always considering that it is Scinde. The bed, partially dry even at this season of the year, retains water in puddles sufficient to occupy the industrious cultivator. On one bank is a thick Shikargah, ‡ forming a tall wall of verdure

* A euphuistic mode of expression: I was nearly drowned there, and it would have been ill-omened to allude directly to the event.

† A branch of the Fulailee river which runs south of Hyderabad.

‡ A hunting preserve.

with *chevaux-de-frise* of thorned and gnarled branches projecting far over the side; in its impervious shade the wild boar lurks, the jackal prowls, and the timid hog-deer shapes his bounding course. Opposite lies the settlement surrounded by thick gardens of mangoes, castor-plants, and jujubes: the flat roofs of the stuccoed and painted houses belonging to the wealthy peeping from amongst the verdure, and here and there a line of straggling huts, or low bazar, visible through an irregular avenue of fruit trees.

Though it was scarcely six o'clock, not one of us, after a fifteen miles' ride, felt disinclined to break his fast. In less than a quarter of an hour, the horses unbridled, with loosened saddles, and tethered at a safe distance, were champing the contents of their gram bags* with uncommon zest. The stores of the servants' Khurjin†—unleavened bread and pipes, butter and tobacco, cold roast fowls and hard boiled eggs, cheese and sugar,—were scattered under the leafy shade of a tall tamarind, and "down the wind" a large fire of dry thorns, puffing volumes of smoke, was preparing *le nécessaire* for a huge tea-pot, whose

* "Gram" is the oats of this region, a leather bag acting as manger.

† A kind of carpet-bag.

open lid disclosed a variety of brown paper packages stuffed into the smallest possible space. In passing, be it observed, of all the traveller's companions none is equal to the tea-pot; it cheers him when low-spirited, refreshes him when fatigued, soothes him when going to rest, and rouses him when about to rise: no stimulant can "hold a candle" to tea.

Soon all was ready: seated on our Namdas,* with bright brass pipkins doing duty as cups, and, hunting knife in hand, we vigorously attacked the dainties before us; every one in the best of humour; the Ameer loud in his hor! hors! as if his deep potations of milk were getting into his head; Kakoo Mall munching bread and butter like a hungry school-boy; Hari Chand's *lota*† half concealed under his mustachio, and the rest of the attendants epidemically affected by our jollity.

O! pleasant contrast (whispers Reminiscence) to many a "happy breakfast-table" in that dear Old England,—so the duteous traveller must call his fatherland—with its uncomfortable comforts of hissing hot urn, Sevres china, and damask cloth; where the old gentlemen talk angry poli-

* The "Namda" is a bit of felt used as a saddle-cloth on the horse, and a sitting-rug off him.

† A pot or pipkin made of brass or tin.

Drawn on Stone by B Watermore Parkins from a sketch by Lieut M Maclin

tics and dogmatical "shop;" the old ladies chat domestic economy, and fire up when differed with in opinion; where the little girls are grievously pert, and the little boys, come home for the holidays, are terribly rude; where the young ladies display tendencies to *migraines*, and the young gentlemen are inwardly longing for soda water; where consequently, a small Asmodeus called Temper, too frequently takes the top of the board, looking straight in the face of a little devil named Grievance, who is desired to sit at the bottom, Dyspepsia and Nervousness making up the *partie carrée!*

"You recollect, Sahib, that piece of water along which we skirted, near the head of the Ali Bahr Canal?" inquired the Ameer with a plain view to an anecdote.

I replied in the affirmative.

"Last year," continued my friend, "when the waters were out, an English officer was sent down here by the Sarkar (the government) to see what prevented the canal flowing. Nothing could be more simple than the cause; the Scindees had blocked up half the head with a bench of masonry to keep the water from my lands. And the gentleman, though he could read and write like a clerk, spoke Hindostani, counted sums and had a hundred contrivances of chains, poles, stands

and telescopes, was quite puzzled about it. He little knew what scoundrels the Scindees are! Once, when strolling about that very piece of water, he saw a man drowning in the middle of it, whilst fifty fellows were squatting on the bank quietly looking at him. Then he ordered them to save the man, and when they only stared at him, he flogged them;—of course all ran away. Had he offered them a rupee, not one of them but would have obeyed him. So the Sahib was obliged to undress and to save the man himself. But then what happened? As soon as the water flowed out of the fellow's throat, and the gentleman had loosed his heels, he said to him—'Sahib, you have preserved me, what are you going to give me?' And when the Sahib replied that he had done enough for him that morning, the Scindee not only muttered curses, but grew bold, and declared that of all the white devils he had never seen such a devil as he,—his preserver. The consequence was that the Sahib was obliged to whip him, and the fellow ran over to me wishing to know if H. E. the Governor would not take his part."

"And what did you, Meer Sahib?"

"I?" said the Ameer; "I told him that the Franks were strangers, not of our breed, and therefore not a reasonable people. But the water seemed to have got into the fellow's brain: he

put his face before me, and gave me an answer, so, hor! hor! I—"

Here the Ameer expressively waved his hand horizontally to and fro, thereby greatly edifying the listeners. He then placed his forefinger on his lips, pantomiming that a little "Bamboo-bakhshish"* had effectually stopped the unreasonable complainant's tongue.

The breakfast was soon ended: the pipes were lighted, puffed, and packed up; saddles were girt tight, bridles drawn on, and in half an hour after the halt we found ourselves pricking o'er the plain towards the Haran Shikargah.

* * * * *

"There are the Kings,"† cried the Ameer, nodding towards a little group which was sitting at the foot of a tall Shikargah wall fronting a long Juwari‡ stubble; "there are the Kings; what can the varlets mean by waiting here?"

The reason was easily explained. They had marked down a hare, and proposed to begin the day's work upon it.

We dismounted from our horses and tethered

* In English a sound caning.

† Scindians most unetymologically derive "Bashah" from Badshah, a monarch; that species of hawk is a favourite with them, so they must have a high-sounding name for it.

‡ A well known grain.

them; then the Ameer and I taking a cast* of Bashas from the Bazdars, unhooded them and placed them on the fist. Forming a rude line we advanced across the plain, soon started an unhappy little Khargosh,† and threw up first one "hand,"‡ then the other in the direction of its flight.

It was beautiful to see the working of the little hawks. Too weak to stop the hare by a single swoop, they combined their strength, alternately hovering over the animal's back so as to confuse it with fear, now loitering behind, now hurrying before it, wounding it as each passed by an oblique stroke with the heel talon.§ Quickly blow succeeded blow, to the great delight of the Beloches, whose sharp eyes instantly detected the effect of their favourites' prowess, and "Shahbash|| the little one!"—"Shah-

* A "cast" is a pair of hawks.

† A hare, literally the "donkey-eared."

‡ A single hawk in Eastern falconry is technically called a "hand of hawk,"—ek *dast* baz, as a single falconer is an "arm of falconer,"—ek *bazu* Bazdar.

§ This game is familiar to every Indian sportsman; it is generally practised by sparrow-hawks on wounded quail or partridge.

|| In the Persian language, "be thou a king!" commonly used in Central Asia, to express approbation, as "bravo" is in Europe.

bash the big one!!"— burst turn by turn from every mouth.

After the first fifty yards' run, the timid quarry began to stagger, presently it fell, rolling over and over like a football.

"Catch it alive, catch it alive!" shouted the Ameer far behind us—the Scindian Falstaff was completely blown by the pace—"It will do well enough for the goshawks."

The nearest attendant seized the hare's leg before the Bashas made their last pounce upon it, and loosing the sheet from his waist spread it over the prize; whilst the falconers whooping as usual lured their birds to them, and rewarded their efforts with the customary "Chak"* or two.

After stowing away the hare in an empty Khurjin, we moved on towards the Shikargah with all four Bashahs carefully hooded. At last reaching a well-known Jheel, the falconer halted us to reconnoitre and hold a council of war as to the best way of attacking the countless multitude before us.

It was a heart-gladdening spectacle for a sportsman. The pure blue sheet of water lined with a fringe of vivid green, was literally covered with feathered life. The king-curlew with his

* A "taste" of blood or brain.

ruby crown, and the common curlew so celebrated, despite his homely garb, for the soaring and racing chase* he affords, were pacing the banks in busy troops. Gulls and graceful terns hovered over the marsh, here alone in the air, there mingled with flights of red and white Brahminee ducks, wheeling about in search of a spot to light on. The tall Saras stood in pairs,† now plunging their bills into the shallow waters, now scattering pearly drops from their pink throats: the bittern's ruff peeped out of the green weeds, and the snowy white cloak of the paddy-bird glistened dazzlingly amongst the russet-coloured uniforms of duck and diver, snipe and snippet, plover and wild goose. Lank herons were there, and stout matronly pelicans gazing stolidly before them, with bustards large as turkeys, and a goodly array of plump little teal; the painted snipe with beautiful dark colours ornamenting his wings; the mallard with his gorgeous plume, and many varieties of quiet-looking cranes swam and dived, and shook, and splashed, all screaming, each in his own tongue, their natural joy in a life to them at that moment full of charms.

* Whereas the heron gives only a soaring flight.

† In India the natives strongly object to shooting these birds, about which they have a multitude of curious stories. There is a prevalent idea that if one of a pair be killed, the survivor never fails to die of a "broken heart."

The fates protected the denizens of that marsh. Hawks generally dislike flying at birds over water; and unfortunately for us the thick vegetation of the leeward bank prevented our taking the wind* of the water-fowl.

This became apparent, when a couple of match-lock balls whizzing through the air, and the loud report ringing upon the surface of the Jheel, startled its occupants from their proper occupations. Those that caught sight of the hawks fled shrieking down the wind towards another pond, in a straight line, so that pursuit would inevitably have entailed the loss of a Bashah. Others, with instinctive cunning, wheeled round and round the crystal floor, never passing its limits, till fear allowed them to settle again. A few, but so few, exposed themselves to danger, that we lost nearly two hours in "bagging" half a dozen snipe and teal.

Presently we left the marsh. Our Bazdar had remarked with many curses, a huge "tiger of the air," an Ukab towering in his "pride of place," high above the dense vapours and the reflected heat of the plains. He was apparently determined to dine on a Bashah, for, fast as we shifted our position, he followed us from Jheel

* For hawks generally in going off must breast and rise upon the wind.

to Jheel, and ended by triumphantly ejecting us from his hunting-grounds.

We had not, however, to complain of unsuccess. Outside the Shikargah, amongst the knots of thick bush, black partridge arose much faster than we could bring them down. In a short time the bag contained ten brace of birds, equally charming to the palate and the eye. For the "pot" the Bashah is infinitely superior as a partridge-hawk to the Shikrah; she is swifter, stauncher, more active, and more energetic. The sport is better with single birds than with "casts;" the former allow the quarry some chance of escaping by strength of wing and cunning when put into cover. If two are flown they are certain to fell the game at once, and the falconer is always flurried by their violent propensity to crab over the "pelt."*

On the way homewards, thinking the work of destruction done, we enjoyed, as often happens, the best sport seen that day.

The Ameer had a trick of boasting about his Bashahs, which he declared were trained by the first Bazdar in the kingdom. And it became clear that their prowess on this occasion was by no means equal to what might have been expected from his description of them. The thought

* The dead quarry.

evidently incommoded my fat friend, for he bestrode his mare in deep silence, forgot to laugh, and during nearly an hour's ride did not once call Kakoo Mall "son of a dog."

Suddenly a bright ray of thought flashed through the glooms of Meer Ibrahim Khan's mind. He reined in his mare, dismounted from her, gave her to the attendant, walked up to the "grand falconer," took from him his favourite Bashah, unhooded her, handled her, and, directing the Bazdars to hold the other four in readiness, before we guessed the intention, he flung his bird high in the air towards a Chilla,* which was "lying upon wing" † some thirty yards above our heads.

Fortunately the "make-hawk" ‡ was still sharp set, for he of the "rusty and ragged plume" lost no time to put distance between himself and his enemy. Well did the little Bashah act "hausse-pié;" § well too did the kite, making "towers

* In Hindostanee "Cheel," a kite.

† *Bloqué* or *balancé*, as the French falconers say, poized in the air.

‡ A "make-hawk" is a staunch bird, or one accustomed to fly at a particular kind of game, used to "head the pack" when more than a cast are thrown up at once.

§ Names in ancient heron-hawking. The first falcon cast off was called "hausse-pié," because he caused the quarry to take the air; the second, "tombisseur;" and the third, generally a jer-falcon, "le teneur," or the grappler.

and wrenches" in the air, get to his pitch, and prepare himself for the combat. The "tombiseur," or second hawk sent up to assist, had meanwhile arrived close at hand, and the kite now screaming with fear, and wishing but not daring to show the pursuers his tail, wriggled out of the way of their swoop, dividing his attention between them, and starting convulsively as each clashing of the wings over his head warned him that danger was near.

In vain I requested the Ameer to send up a Laghar as a "teneur." This he positively refused to do, resolving that his Bashahs should have all the honour of the day.

A third hawk was cast off, as the contests and bickerings between the kite and his enemies were verging upon the desperate. Presently one of the hawks closed with him; he fought gallantly enough, returning blow for blow, and "souse for souse," clawing like a cat driven by a terrier into a corner. But his despair availed him little; the third Bashah waiting her opportunity, settled upon his back, the "make-hawk" dug her talons with a *griffade** into his head, and all three came down tumbling through the air *en masse*—with their sharp pinions raised and extended like the

* A *griffade* is a sudden seizure with the claws.

feathers of a giant's shuttlecock—almost at the Ameer's feet.

In a moment the unhappy Chilla, seized by a napkined hand, was put *hors de combat* with a desperate gash across the throat.

Delighted was Ibrahim Khan at this display of successful *haute volerie*.* His face beamed with warm smiles; and as we rode home, he chuckled a dozen times with the most malicious intention at my disbelief in the super-excellence of his Bashahs.

* *Haute volerie* is when hawks are flown at large game, as heron, geese, cranes, and wild duck; the proper victims of *basse volerie* are pheasants, partridges, quails, and other small game-birds.

CHAPTER VI.

TRAINING THE HAWK IN SCINDE.

I SUPPOSE the bird to be well reclaimed and manned, the work of training is now upon the falconer's hands.

The old "Topee" (hood) or rather what remains of it, is cast away, and a new one is fitted to the hawk's head. At night she is placed, unhooded, so that she may peck and plume herself, on her perch* after being watered and fed as usual.† By day when duly "weathered,"‡ she is exer-

* The perch is a round rod projecting from the wall, garnished with cloth, which hangs beneath it like a towel, to assist the bird's ascent when she has happened to flutter off it.

† In training, the hawk must always be as sharp set as her nature allows. It is best to feed once a-day in the evening. Sometimes it is necessary to give two meals; the most favourable times for them are 8 A.M. and 3 P.M. As a general rule eyesses must be kept in high condition; passage-hawks, low.

‡ Weathering, in French, "jardiner," is to expose the birds to the morning sun in a garden or some open place. It is es-

cised with constant carriage, and frequently made to stand to the hood, lest she forget what cost so much labour to teach her.

The first step is to bring the hawk to the fist. The falconer unhoods her, places her upon the perch, and guarding his hand with the napkin, halloes and bribes her to light upon it by exposing a piece of raw meat. If sharp set, she will rarely be shy; a "tid-bit" or two is invariably the reward of good conduct, and sometimes she is allowed to pull upon a stump. The hood is then replaced, and the operation recommences. It is varied in many ways. Sometimes the hawk is placed on the ground, sometimes, her leg being duly secured with a *creance*,* on the branch of a tree. The distance of her flights is gradually increased, but with all possible precaution, for this is a golden rule in falconry—

"You lose infinite time and trouble by endeavouring to educate your hawk too fast; a

sential to their health when shut up, as they usually are here, in warm rooms; the enjoyment they evince on such occasions is acute, rousing themselves, "mantling" and "warbling" (crossing the wings over the back, after stretching the legs), as though they had escaped a prison.

* The French "filière" or "tiens-le-bien," a long thin string tied to the falcon's leg when training, to the lure and to the Bauli or live birds, which are given to her at an advanced period of her education.

single failure undoes the success of a whole week's lessons."

When the pupil comes roundly to the fist from a distance of forty or fifty yards, the falconer passes on to another step. He prepares a lure,* either some dead bird,—a pigeon or a fowl,—or a bamboo bow covered with the dried wings of game bound together. Upon this the hawk is fed; the meat being placed under the pinion so that she fancies it belongs to the deception. The lure is thrown upon the ground, and the bird, if tame enough, is cast off; the falconer whoops, and the hawk, recognizing his cry, swoops down upon it, circling round her instructor according

* In Europe the lure is used only for the long-winged hawks; here it is, I think wisely, employed for both species. The Scindians, however, have not adopted the refinement proposed by Sebright, "using the young hawk when flying at hack to feed always on the lure."

The dead bird, tied by a creance, as generally used in the East, appears preferable to the heavy piece of wood garnished with wings, common in European falconry. The lure, if made to be cast away, must be weighty, otherwise the hawk would carry it off: the result often is that a valuable animal receives a contusion of the breast that seriously injures it, or is frightened from attacking any game in which it detects any resemblance to what hurt it.

The great advantage of using a lure to round-winged hawks is that they will readily come to it, whereas when summoned by the falconer's call, if excited, especially, they are apt either to linger or to turn completely restive.

as he shifts the position of her prey. After three or four *descentes**—more would make her sullen—she is allowed to fasten upon it; the falconer walks gently up to her, coaxing and talking to her, kneels down, slowly puts forth his hand, holds her, and rewards her with a plentiful meal.

In a week the hawk ought to be perfectly familiar with the lure. The falconer then takes some live bird,—a partridge, a pigeon or a crow with his mandibles fastened, and a curb on his bill,†—ties a creance to its leg, casts off the hawk,

* "Swoops."

† Hawks should, as a general rule, be trained upon the game at which they are to be flown. For instance, if the Shahbaz is to catch hares, she must be accustomed to fly at the skin of one stuffed with straw: an assistant drags it along at some distance with a string; the bird is cast off by the falconer, and a slice of raw meat upon the quarry's back induces her to strike it. Some prefer a live hare with a broken leg. There is not, however, much difficulty in preventing a hawk's following any kind of game for whatever time or however eagerly she may have been accustomed to it. She has only to be disgusted with the pursuit by half a dozen unsuccessful flights—the bird being started at such a distance that she fails to come up with it—or by not being allowed to taste it when taken. The preference is fixed upon the game to which the hawk is directed by throwing up a few victims with shortened wings, which she is allowed to strike down as soon, and to tire and plume as much as she pleases.

The heron, it must be recollected, should be gagged as well

and whooping to her throws the live lure upon the ground. By jerking the prey out of her reach as she swoops at it, her anger is excited. The trainer then throws up a bird of the same colour with eyes seeled and wings shortened. This is called the first Bauli;* if the hawk attack it boldly, a favourable judgment of her nature and breeding is formed. When she strikes it down she is allowed a "gurgiting;"† her hood is then replaced, and she is carried home.

On the eventful evening when the first Bauli is given, the falconer gives "casting" to his bird, and, after weathering her, next morning physics her with cardamoms and sugar-candy. She remains upon the perch that day, and in the afternoon is only half fed, so as to be in readiness for another lesson on the morrow.

The second Bauli is a bird with open eyes; the feathers of its wings are cropped and it is thrown up high in the air by an assistant at some

as the crow; the beak will sometimes kill a dog, and it is always too powerful a weapon for a hawk when both birds are on the ground. The Bazdar, when he sees them fall, rushes up, plunges the heron's beak in the earth, and holding its legs and wings, allows his Shahin or Bahri to kill it.

* Some native falconers prefer three, others four, Bauli (live lures); the number—though there is a magic in numbers—matters little, provided the one chosen suffice to do its duty.

† Or "gorging," a full meal.

distance from the falconer. After a day's interval, without however physicking the bird, the third is given,* and lastly the fourth Bauli, if there is to be one.

The *affaitage*† of the hawk is now complete. Nothing remains but to take her into the open country, and to enter her upon wild game. This is decidedly the most nervous moment to the falconer, who knows how easy it is to reclaim a bird, how difficult to make her fly. Even the best trainers, either by some unintentional neglect or by a freak in the hawk's appetite,—the great principle of hawking,—have endured the most notable disappointments. A goshawk that has flown at all her Bauli with the ferocity of an eagle will now and then, when thrown at a wild bird, show fear to engage it, and return cowed to the wrist. A Laghar will often, after taking wildly after an Obara,‡ rake off in a different direction and disappear over the ridge of a hill, carrying

* The third (when there is a fourth) is a full-feathered bird that has been caught the day before, or by some such device somewhat weakened. The fourth Bauli is a perfect bird.

† Training, education.

‡ Or Hobara (in Arabic حبارى, Hubara), a kind of bastard bustard, common in Scinde, Southern Persia, and other parts of Central Asia. On account of its comparative rarity, wildness, and strength of wing, it is considered to afford excellent sport.

with her the hopes and fears of a whole month's training. Sometimes you will see your Shikrah, indifferent to your whoop and whistle as if she were born deaf, quietly pluming herself on the top of a lofty tree when coveys of partridges are scudding over the ground beneath; and even your obedient little Bashah will, if the Fates be against you, take to squatting with the immovability of a stuffed bird upon the first opportune place which she meets in her course.

Should this occur occasionally, you compassionate, should it often happen, you dismiss, your Bazdar. A good trainer, like all other things human, is liable to error, but when many hawks go wrong, it is a sign that their instructor is not knowing enough to discover, and to allow for the difference of his birds' dispositions; that he has cowed the easily disheartened, and has only half reclaimed the *voluntaires et libertins;* that he has wasted a world of pains upon a stubborn brute which should have been "abandoned" at once, and has perhaps by one unlucky action taught, instead of untaught, his birds to carry.*

The average length of training in Scinde is

* The hawk carries, not because she dreads the falconer, but because, being hungry, and provided with the materials of a meal, she sees in his approach an attempt to rob her of what is hers.

about a fortnight, after allowing a week or ten days for reclaiming the bird. The best falconers boast that under favourable circumstances they can get through the work in half the time. As in India, however, so here, the common way of training long-winged hawks is to "fly them out of the hood," that is to say, to cast them off at the game when it rises, instead of teaching them to mount high, range far, and fly round the falconer before the quarry is sprung. The former, as might be expected, is far the shorter and easier as well as the inferior way. And finally some birds are sooner tamed than others; even between individuals of the same species there is occasionally so much difference, that one will require at least a third more breaking than another before it becomes thoroughly fit to take the field.

CHAPTER VII.

DE VARIIS REBUS ACCIPITRARIIS.

As hunger is the great principle of falconry, the Bazdar considers it a point meriting his utmost attention.

Hawks are not generally flown more than three or four times a week, and six flights are considered a fair morning's work. The day before flying is distinguished by a single, instead of a double meal, and the quantity of food is carefully proportioned to the mettle of the bird.* On the day of flying they are plentifully fed, usually before quitting the field; the evening meal, also, is a solid one. Then a half-fast, and no food whatever on the morning when they are taken out to hunt.†

* As a general rule, the hawk must be made as vigorous as possible. Too much fasting impairs the bird's powers; too much food deprives her of all activity.

† The best state of a hawk's appetite is about a couple of hours after her usual time of feeding. Whilst hunting she is allowed a taste or two of heart or brain, never more, for obvious reasons. And she is fed on the field because the warm

Eastern falconers have deeply studied the natural habits of their charges, as many parts of their treatment prove. They are regularly weathered twice a day, all the year round, in some pleasant place, an orchard or a garden. Twice, and sometimes three times a week they are made to bathe in a clear pool of fresh water. Sometimes they are starved for three or four days, and regularly once a week they have a "gurgiting," such as they would indulge themselves in were they left to nature in their wild state. The hood is kept scrupulously free from vermin, and the soiled parts of their furniture are changed before they become offensive to the bearers.

By great attention to these points, especially to the feeding, hawks may be preserved from a multitude of diseases. The signs of health are bright eyes, a tongue free from scale, a whole and smooth coat, a full breast, and a weight proportioned to the size of the body. Nothing is more pernicious than the system of drugs, "death's ceaseless fountain" to beast as well as man. Equally injurious to the hawk are the "raw beef soaked in rhubarb water," the "white pills," the aloes and the "musk pills" of our ancestors,

flesh of the quarry, with an occasional mouthful of feathers, is far better for her than the cold meat,—mutton or goat's flesh, with which she is supplied in the house.

the bleedings twice a year, and the emetics of "ten split pepper corns wrapped up in a fowl's skin." The Scindians are more sensible than we were. Every now and then the Bazdar hankers after some Musallah,* Battisa,† or other infallible recipe learned either by tradition, or perhaps borrowed from the pages of the Baznamch; usually, however, he contents himself with a simple dose of sugar-candy and cardamoms, with castings, and with the invaluable adhibition of air and exercise.

Next to drugs, cold is the greatest enemy the hawk has. She should be kept in a warm, dry room, and seldom hunted except on clear, sunny days. A wet, raw atmosphere is to her the fertile source of diseases and death.

When the bird is wounded, the place is carefully washed, and sewn up with a fine needle. If the legs be chafed by the jesses, the Bazdar generally oils or butters them. It would be better, however, merely to cover the sore with a cold-water bandage, as grease of all kinds injures the *manteau*.‡ When the tail or the pinions are

* Spices.

† A favourite Indian medicine, composed of thirty-two ingredients, whence its name. The amount of injury it does to horses is incalculable.

‡ Coat or plumage.

accidentally broken, the falconer, with a sharp knife, removes as much of the injured feather as is deemed necessary, and performs the process of "imping*" by neatly sewing and binding to the shaft a substitute which exactly matches the lost part.

The hawking season in Scinde is from October to March, though some begin in September, and others as early as August. As the hawking time draws near, the Bazdar gives his falcons bits of rangle† the size of a pea in order to prevent their laying eggs. On the first of April at the latest, the birds are placed in the mew or chamber where they are to moult. Many of them, especially the Shahbaz, at this season require great care and attention. They are fed moderately twice a day, so as to be kept *attrempés*,‡ and if their appetite be delicate, such dainties as larks, sparrows and paroquets are regularly provided for them.

* The old falconers used to cut off the broken feather and introduce a fresh one bound round and pasted, as they would engraft a sprig upon the stock of a tree. The moderns prefer to cut both feathers (the injured one and its substitute) obliquely, with corresponding slope, and unite them by means of an iron needle. This they wet with strong brine, and thrust through the centre of the two feathers, perfectly straight, and about the same length in each. The salt and water causes it to rust, and thus it holds the longer and the more firmly.

† Gravel, generally given to bring down the stomach.

‡ That is to say, neither fat nor thin.

CHAPTER VIII.

A DAY WITH THE SHAHBAZ.

"Did you ever see a lovelier bird to the eye than that is, Sahib?"

I could not tell the Ameer that I had. Upon his wrist was a splendid goshawk, unhooded as usual, perfect in all her points, with great deep-set eyes, blue beak, bright yellow sear,* small castey head, broad throat, full breast, covered with regular mail,† broad sails with long projecting "principal feathers,"‡ and a queenly train,§ of perfect regularity. Most majestic was her attitude as she sat upon the arm of royalty, clasping it with her singles,‖ and firmly resisting

* The "sear," or "sere," is the yellow part between the beak and eyes.

† The "mails" are the breast feathers.

‡ The "sails" are the wings: the "beams" are the long feathers of the wing, generally: the two longest are called "principal feathers," the two next "flags," and so on, there being a name for each in ancient falconry.

§ The tail.

‖ The toes.

the wind—*chevauchant le vent*, as French falconers express it, — with the stiffness of an eagle.

Our old authors are fond of commending the goshawk.* She is, according to them, a "choice and dainty bird" for the falconer, and their sport with her was right good, she being "flown at wild goose, hare and coney; nay, she will venture to seize a goat."

I am not prepared to assert that the race of goshawk has, like many other moderns, degenerated from the spirit and virtue of its ancestors: certainly, however, the descriptions of our modern ornithologists lead one to suspect something wrong.

Sebright expresses his surprise that any one should use goshawks for sport: he declares that they cannot fly half as fast as a strong partridge, that they are too slow for an open country, so slack mettled that it requires the most skilful management to make them fly at all, and, finally, that, in his opinion, they are best fitted to catch rabbits.

* This word seems to be derived from "gross-hawk," for the same reason that the Orientals call the bird "Shah-baz," or "hawk-king." It is the *falco palumbarius* of Linnæus—a hawk (not a falcon, properly speaking, its wings being shorter than its tail)—and is common to Europe and Asia, generally preferring hilly to very mountainous countries or hot plains.

Others insult the bird by declaring that she was a big sparrow-hawk (of the sub-genus "Accipiter"), till Cuvier, observing the comparative shortness and stoutness of the tarsi, together with the moderate length of the middle toe,* opened to her a fresh family, the Asturs. They compare her flight to that of an owl; her conduct, after she has "put in"† her quarry, to a cat's, and opine that she "acts terrier" when she ventures into the bush pursuing it.

The fact is, that a good goshawk is an excellent bird, but, at the same time, as difficult to find good, as she is common. The bad ones so differ from the best in form as well as spirit, that one is almost tempted to believe the old assertion made about this hawk, namely, that she pairs with the tiercelet, but, at the same time, allows the gallantries of sparrow-hawks, and other low-born *cicisbei*.

The Shahbaz is brought down from the northern hills to Scinde about the commencement of winter. As a hawk of the first year, unmoulted, summed with perfect plume, fresh, strong, and lively, is

* The sparrow-hawks have shorter wings, tarsi longer and more slender, a more lengthened middle toe and feebler claws than the goshawk.

† To "put in" the quarry is to drive it into a bush.

an expensive* bird, she is not turned loose when the season is over. During the moult, however, she requires much care, and, besides, she is subject to a variety of dangerous diseases.

* * * * *

The "lovely bird" was to act in concert with a cast of tiercelets, and the Ameer promised excellent sport.

There is very little amusement in hare hunting with the goshawk. The timid brute starts, and is struck down generally within the minute. One curious part of the proceeding attracts the practised eye, making one marvel how the bird of prey, in her wild state, manages it.

The Shahbaz invariably seizes the hare, fixing her powerful singles in the fur of its back, and, with the talons of the other foot, she grapples at a tuft of grass, or some projecting twig of a bush, so as suddenly to arrest its flight. When flown at that game she is invariably breeched, a broad leather thong being passed from the right to the left knee, where it is securely buttoned. Were this neglected, the natives assure us there is imminent danger of the hawk's being split up. Therefore it is probable that, in

* Sometimes costing as much as 20*l.*; a sum in Scinde fully equal to 200*l.* in England.

a state of nature, the hawk rarely, if ever, flies at a hare.

En revanche, most exciting is the pursuit of the Obara. A line of horsemen, following the falconer, scours the plain, facing the birds, that would otherwise lie or run to rise from their feeding place. Immediately the goshawk is cast off. The quarry slowly mounting — a flight, which the Shahbaz finds the most difficult,— makes for the nearest ridge in sight. The work now begins: riding to hounds, even in Galway, is a joke compared with riding to hawks. You have no "bullfinches," true, and no stone walls, there is no timber, and you never come to "the brook." But walls may be broken down, hedges have gaps, and five-barred gates yield to the hunting whip. Here your obstacles are more serious ones. A thin curtain of tamarisk conceals the plain, and forms, with its tough and twisted stems, an unseen quickset awaiting every stride: when it is thick, you might as well attempt to ride through half a mile of strong fishing-nets, carefully staked down. Out of cover the ground is gashed with gigantic sun-cracks: where these fissures abound not, deep holes, treacherously concealed by tiny mounds of earth, supply their place, and, every now and then, you come upon a perpendicular banked nullah, some twenty feet

wide, by thirty in depth, with a suddenness equally startling to your nag and yourself. Accidents are the more likely to occur, as during the four miles of best speed gallop, which the Obara, if a good one, is safe to lead you, your vision is, or should be, mostly directed above, not before you. Occasionally you recreate your mind by a retrospective glance, which shows you the field in most admired disorder: here a head sinking into an overgrown ditch, there a pair of heels protruding from a bunch of cactus, and there a natural summersault, thrown so high, so far, that it recalls to mind the artificialities of the hippodrome to cast them into shade.

* * * * *

"Stop!" said the Ameer, painfully excited;—"You, Gul Mammad, ride softly round and place yourself behind the brow of that hill. You, Fauju, to the opposite side."

My friend's acute *coup d'œil* had marked a pair of antelopes quietly grazing in the bit of green valley far beyond. A glance through the glass assured me that he had not erred: what to the naked eye appeared two formless, yellow marks upon a field of still undried grass, became by means of the telescope, a pair of those beautiful little beings our poets call "gazelles."

Ibrahim Khan disposed his force skilfully. Reserving the falconer and a Kuttewala* with two fierce, gaunt Kelat greyhounds, he stationed his men in a circle concealed from the sharp eyes of the antelopes, leaving a gap to windward of them to prevent the scent reaching their nostrils, and to serve as a trap for them to fall into.

Presently the horsemen, emerging from behind the rocks and hill tops, began to advance slowly towards the quarry, and in a moment, the startled animals, sighting the forms of many enemies, sprang high up and bounded towards the only way of escape.

As the doe passed us at headlong speed, the Ameer turned round so as to conceal her from the view of the goshawk. A few moments afterwards I gave the signal; he bent forward over his mare's neck, and directing the Shahbaz towards the buck as he flew by, threw up the bird from his wrist with a shout.

The two greyhounds, free from the leash, dashed forward at that moment. All was hurry and excitement. Horsemen and footmen crowded in pursuit, every man straining his eyes to keep the quarry in full view.

The rocky ground, unfavourable to the pur-

* A dog-keeper.

suers, was all the antelope could desire. His long thin legs, almost disproportioned to the size of the body, were scarcely visible, so rapid were their twinkling motions. Here he cleared a huge boulder of rock, there he plunged into the air over the topmost twigs of a euphorbium bush; here he threaded his way through the pebbly bed of a torrent, there perched for an instant upon a stony ledge, he fearlessly prepared to foot the slippery descent beyond. Such a country could not but be puzzling to dogs, though ours were wary old greyhounds that had hunted by sight for years; they fell far behind, and to all prospect the gazelle was lost.

"She has eaten too much—a blight upon her mother!" cried a furious voice by my side. The Ameer was right. Had his bird been sharper set, the chase would have lost half its difficulty.

The Shahbaz, who at first had flown gallantly at the quarry, soon began to check, and as we were riding far behind over the difficult ground, appeared inclined to abandon her game. But when, escaping from the punchbowl of rock, we reached a long level plain of silt, the aspect of affairs improved.

At a distance, which was palpably diminishing, we saw the goshawk attacking her game. Now she swooped upon its back, deeply scoring the

delicate yellow coat as she passed by. Then she descended upon the animal's head, deafening it with her clashing pinions, and blinding it with her talons. This manœuvre, at first seldom practised out of respect for the dagger-like horns, whose sharp, black tips never failed to touch the pursuer's *balai*, or pendent feathers,* was soon preferred to the other. As the victim, losing strength and breath by excess of fear, could no longer use its weapons with the same dexterity, the boldness of the Shahbaz increased. She seemed to perch upon its brow: once or twice it fell, and when it arose, its staggering, uncertain gait gave evidence of extreme distress.

Then the dogs, who had become ferocious as wolves, gained sensibly upon their victim. The sound of their approach but added to its terror what it took from its speed. Even before they had fastened their fangs upon its quarters, the unhappy gazelle was stretched panting and struggling with the Shahbaz straining every nerve to pin its head to the ground.

The best proof to me of the Kelat greyhound's ferocity was the conduct of the Kuttewala when he came up with his charges. Not daring to interrupt with the hand their wrangling and

* The *balai* is the falcon's tail; the pendent feathers those behind her thighs.

Drawn on Stone by H Weterhouse Hawkins from a sketch by Lieut.^t M.^c Millan.

THE DEATH OF THE GAZELLE

Published by John Van Voorst, Paternoster Row, 1852.

worrying the prey, he drew from his belt a long cord noosed at both ends, and throwing it over them as if it were a lasso, drew them off with a wariness that looked like the result of much disagreeable experience.

The death of the gazelle is now considered the highest triumph of Eastern falconry. As with us, there are amongst them traditions that in ancient times the *haute volerie* was of a nobler kind,—that the wolf of the woods and the wild sheep of the hills were the favourite quarry of the barons, white and black, who, ignoring or disdaining such poaching tools as musket and matchlock, prided themselves upon the prowess of a hawk as of a son or a second self.

Meer Ibrahim Khan Talpur the remainder of that day was almost as lively a companion as a subaltern newly returned from "seeing service." He slew his antelope some twenty successive deaths, praised to the skies everything that was his especially; more especially his Bashahs, his falconer, his dogs, his dogkeeper; most especially as her due, his goshawk. As regards the latter, a little romancing was allowed to mingle its alloy with the pure vein of veritable history. Every bough we saw on our way home reminded him of some doubtful exploit performed by that same Shahbaz. At dinner, the gazelle steaks

brought her mention prominently forward, and the music, wine, and joviality of the evening elevating him, also tended in no small degree to elevate her and her qualities. At last it was proposed to try her upon one of the wild goats that roam over the deserts separating Cutch from Scinde.

"Her success" said the Ameer, "is certain."

"Certain," repeated Kakoo Mall.

"Certain," nodded Hari Chand, whispering: "the gazelle of this year, next year will be a Gorkhar!"*

Whether the sneer has, or has not been justified, I know not. Perhaps it may so happen that in some day to come the Ameer Ibrahim, seduced by the *gobemouche* auditory of a wonder-loving British traveller may point to the bird in question with a—

"You see that Shahbaz? Well, Wallah! By the beard of the Prophet I swear to you, five years ago she felled a wild ass. You may believe me; although a Beloch, I do not tell a lie. Billah! A 'man-with-a-hat'† was with me when it happened. Ask Burton Sahib, if it did not."

* A wild ass.

† Topee-wala, a European opposed to Pugree-wala, a "man in a turban," the common Indian and Scindian way of denoting an Asiatic.

Then will Kakoo Mall, if he be living, ejaculate "certainly," and Hari Chand, if he be present, exclaim "certainly;" and in a word, every man or boy that has ears to hear and eyes to see, will re-echo "certainly," and swear himself an eye-witness of the event, to the extreme confusion of Fact and Fiction.

POSTSCRIPT.

I EXTRACT the following few lines from a well known literary journal as a kind of excuse for venturing, unasked, upon a scrap of autobiography. As long as critics content themselves with bedevilling one's style, discovering that one's slang is "vulgar," and one's attempts at drollery "failures," one should, methinks, listen silently to their ideas of "gentility," and accept their definitions of wit,—reserving one's own opinion upon such subjects. For the British author in this, our modern day, engages himself as Clown in a great pantomime, to be knocked down, and pulled up, slashed, tickled and buttered *à discrétion* for the benefit of a manual-pleasantry-loving Public. So it would be weakness in him to complain of bruised back, scored elbows and bumped head.

Besides, the treatment you receive varies prodigiously according to the temper and the manifold influences from without that operate upon the gentleman that operates upon you. For instance—

"'Tis a *failure* at being *funny*," says surly Aristarchus, when, for some reason or other, he dislikes you or your publisher.

"It is a *smart* book," opines another, who has no particular reason to be your friend.

"Narrated with *freshness of thought*," declares a third, who takes an honest pride in "giving the devil his due."

"Very *clever*," exclaims the amiable critic, who for some reason or other likes you or your publisher.

"There is *wit* and *humour* in these pages," says the gentleman who has some particular reason to be your friend.

"Evinces considerable *talent*."

And—

"There is *genius* in this book," declare the dear critics who in any way identify themselves or their interests with you.

Now for the extract,—

"Mr. Burton was, it appears, stationed for five years in Scinde with his regiment, and it is due to him to say, that he has set a good example to his fellow-subalterns by pursuing so diligently his inquiries into the language, literature and customs of the native population by which he was surrounded. We are far from accepting all his doctrines on questions of Eastern policy,—

especially as regards the treatment of natives; but we are sensible of the value of the additional evidence which he has brought forward on many important questions. For a young man, he seems to have adopted some very extreme opinions; and it is perhaps not too much to say, that the fault from which he has most to fear, not only as an author, but as an Indian officer, is, a disregard of those well-established rules of moderation which no one can transgress with impunity."

The greatest difficulty a raw writer on Indian subjects has to contend with, is a proper comprehension of the *ignorance crasse* which besets the mind of the home-reader and his oracle the critic. What a knowledge these lines do show of the opportunity for study presented to the Anglo-Indian subaltern serving with his corps! During the few months when I did duty with mine, we were quartered at Gharra, a heap of bungalows surrounded by a wall of milk-bush; on a sandy flat, near a dirty village whose timorous inhabitants shunned us as walking pestilences. No amount of domiciliary visitings would have found a single Scindian book in the place, except the accounts of the native shopkeepers; and, to the best of my remembrance, there was not a soul who could make himself intelligible in the common medium of Indian intercourse,—Hindos-

tani. An ensign stationed in Dover Castle might write Ellis's Antiquities; a *sous-lieutenant* with his corps at Boulogne might compose the *Legendaire de la Morinie*, but Gharra was sufficient to paralyse the readiest pen that ever coursed over foolscap paper.

Now, waiving with all due modesty the unmerited compliment of "good boy," so gracefully tendered to me, I proceed to the judgment which follows it, my imminent peril of "extreme opinions." If there be any value in the "additional evidence" I have "brought forward on important questions," the reader may, perchance, be curious to know how that evidence was collected. So without further apology, I plunge into the subject.

After some years of careful training for the church in the north and south of France, Florence, Naples and the University of Pisa, I found myself one day walking the High Street, Oxford, with all the emotions which a Parisian exquisite of the first water would experience on awaking—at 3 P.M.,—in "Dandakaran's tangled wood."

To be brief, my "college career" was highly unsatisfactory. I began a "reading man," worked regularly twelve hours a day, failed in everything—chiefly, I flattered myself, because Latin hexameters and Greek iambics had not

entered into the list of my studies,—threw up the classics, and returned to old habits of fencing, boxing, and single-stick, handling the "ribbons," squiring dames, and sketching facetiously, though not wisely, the reverend features and figures of certain half-reformed monks, calling themselves "fellows." My reading also ran into bad courses,—Erpenius, Zadkiel, Falconry, Cornelius Agrippa, and the Art of Pluck.

At last the Affghan war broke out. After begging the paternal authority in vain for the Austrian service, the Swiss guards at Naples, and even the *Légion étrangère*, I determined to leave Oxford, *coûte qui coûte*. The testy old lady, Alma Mater, was easily persuaded to consign, for a time, to "country nursing" the froward brat who showed not a whit of filial regard for her. So, after two years, I left Trinity without a "little go" in a high dog-cart,—a companion in misfortune too-tooing lustily through a "yard of tin," as the dons stared up from their game of bowls to witness the departure of the forbidden vehicle. Thus having thoroughly established the fact that I was fit for nothing but to be "shot at for sixpence a day," and as those Affghans (how I blessed their name!) had cut gaps in many a regiment, the "relieving officer" thought proper to provide me with a commission in the Indian

army, and to start me as quickly as feasible for the "land of the sun."

So, my friends and fellow soldiers, I may address you in the words of the witty thief,—slightly altered from Gil Blas,—"Blessings on the dainty pow of the old Dame who turned me out of her house; for had she shown clemency I should now doubtless be a dyspeptic don, instead of which I have the honour to be a lieutenant, your comrade."

As the Bombay pilot sprang on board, Twenty Mouths agape over the gangway, all asked one and the same question. Alas! the answer was a sad one! — the Affghans had been defeated — the Avenging Army had retreated—peace was restored to Asia! The Twenty Mouths all ejaculated a something unfit for ears polite.

To a mind thoroughly impressed with the sentiment that

> "Man wants but little here below,
> Nor wants that little long,"

the position of an ensign in the Hon. E. I. Company's Service is a very satisfactory one. He has a horse or two, part of a house, a pleasant mess, plenty of pale ale, as much shooting as he can manage, and an occasional invitation to a dance, where there are thirty-two cavaliers to three dames, or to a dinner party when a chair un-

expectedly falls vacant. But some are vain enough to want more, and of these fools was I.

In India two roads lead to preferment. The direct highway is "service;"—getting a flesh wound, cutting down a brace of natives, and doing something eccentric, so that your name may creep into a despatch. The other path, study of the languages, is a rugged and tortuous one, still you have only to plod steadily along its length, and, sooner or later, you must come to a "staff appointment." *Bien entendu*, I suppose you to be destitute of or deficient in Interest whose magic influence sets down you at once, a heaven-born staff officer, at the goal which others must toil to reach.

A dozen lessons from Professor Forbes and a native servant on board the *John Knox*, enabled me to land with *éclat* as a griff, and to astonish the throng of palanquin bearers that jostled, pushed, and pulled me at the pier head, with the vivacity and nervousness of my phraseology. And I spent the first evening in company with one Dossabhoee Sorabjee, a white-bearded Parsee, who, in his quality of language-master had vernacularized the tongues of Hormuzd knows how many generations of Anglo-Indian subalterns.

The corps to which I was appointed, was then in country quarters at Baroda in the land of

Guzerat; the journey was a long one, the difficulty of finding good instructors there was great, so was the expense, moreover fevers abounded, and, lastly, it was not so easy to obtain leave of absence to visit the Presidency, where candidates for the honours of language are examined. These were serious obstacles to success; they were surmounted however in six months, at the end of which time I found myself in the novel position of "passed interpreter in Hindostani."

My success,—for I had distanced a field of eleven,—encouraged me to a second attempt, and though I had to front all the difficulties over again, in four months my name appeared in orders as qualified to interpret in the Guzerattee tongue.

Meanwhile the Ameers of Scinde had exchanged their palaces at Hyderabad for other quarters not quite so comfortable at Hazaree-bagh, and we were ordered up to the Indus for the pleasant purpose of acting police there. Knowing the conqueror's chief want, a man who could speak a word of his pet conquests' vernacular dialect, I had not been a week at Kurrachee before I found a language-master and a book. But the study was undertaken *invitâ Minervâ*. We were quartered in tents, dust-storms howled over us daily, drills and brigade parades were never ending, and, as I was acting

interpreter to my regiment, courts martial of dreary length occupied the best part of my time. Besides, it was impossible to work in such an atmosphere of discontent. The seniors abhorred the barren desolate spot, with all its inglorious perils of fever, spleen, dysentery, and congestion of the brain, the juniors grumbled in sympathy, and the staff officers, ordered up to rejoin the corps—it was on field service—complained bitterly of having to quit their comfortable appointments in more favoured lands without even a campaign in prospect. So when, a month or two after landing in the country, we were transferred from Kurrachee to Gharra—purgatory to the other locale—I threw aside Scindee for Maharattee, hoping, by dint of reiterated examinations, to escape the place of torment as soon as possible. It was very like studying Russian in an English country town; however, with the assistance of Molesworth's excellent dictionary, and the regimental Pundit, or schoolmaster, I gained some knowledge of the dialect, and proved myself duly qualified in it at Bombay. At the same time a brother subaltern and I had jointly leased a Persian Moonshee, one Mirza Mohammed Hosayn of Shiraz, — poor fellow, after passing through the fires of Scinde unscathed, he returned to his delightful land for a few weeks to die there!—and we laid the foun-

dation of a lengthened course of reading in that most elegant of oriental languages.

Now it is a known fact that a good staff appointment has the general effect of doing away with one's bad opinion of any place whatever. So when, by the kindness of a friend whose name *his* modesty prevents my mentioning, the Governor of Scinde was persuaded to give me the temporary appointment of Assistant in the Survey, I began to look with interest upon the desolation around me. The country was a new one, so was its population, so was their language. After reading all the works published upon the subject, I felt convinced that none but Mr. Crow and Capt. J. McMurdo had dipped beneath the superficies of things. My new duties compelled me to spend the cold season in wandering over the districts, levelling the beds of canals, and making preparatory sketches for a grand survey. I was thrown so entirely amongst the people as to depend upon them for society, and the "dignity," not to mention the increased allowances of a staff officer, enabled me to collect a fair stock of books, and to gather around me those who could make them of any use. So, after the first year, when I had Persian at my fingers' ends, sufficient Arabic to read, write, and converse fluently, and a superficial

knowledge of that dialect of Punjaubee which is spoken in the wilder parts of the province, I began the systematic study of the Scindian people, their manners and their tongue.

The first difficulty was to pass for an Oriental, and this was as necessary as it was difficult. The European official in India seldom, if ever sees anything in its real light, so dense is the veil which the fearfulness, the duplicity, the prejudice and the superstitions of the natives hang before his eyes. And the white man lives a life so distinct from the black, that hundreds of the former serve through what they call their "term of exile," without once being present at a circumcision feast, a wedding, or a funeral. More especially the present generation, whom the habit and the means of taking furloughs, the increased facility for enjoying ladies' society, and, if truth be spoken, a greater regard for appearances if not a stricter code of morality, estrange from their dusky fellow subjects every day and day the more. After trying several characters, the easiest to be assumed was, I found, that of a half Arab, half Iranian, such as may be met with in thousands along the northern shore of the Persian Gulf. The Scindians would have detected in a moment the difference between my articulation and their

own, had I attempted to speak their vernacular dialect, but they attributed the accent to my strange country, as naturally as a home-bred Englishman would account for the bad pronunciation of a foreigner calling himself partly Spanish, partly Portuguese. Besides, I knew the countries along the Gulf by heart from books, I had a fair knowledge of the Shiah form of worship prevalent in Persia, and my poor Moonshee was generally at hand to support me in times of difficulty, so that the danger of being detected, — even by a "real Simon Pure,"—was a very inconsiderable one.

With hair falling upon his shoulders, a long beard, face and hands, arms and feet, stained with a thin coat of henna, Mirza Abdullah of Bushire—your humble servant, gentle reader —set out upon many and many a trip. He was a Bazzaz, a vender of fine linen, calicoes and muslins;—such chapmen are sometimes admitted to display their wares even in the sacred harem by "fast" and fashionable dames;—and he had a little pack of *bijouterie* and *virtù* reserved for emergencies. It was only, however, when absolutely necessary that he displayed his stock-in-trade; generally, he contented himself with alluding to it on all possible occasions, boasting largely of his traffic, and asking a thousand questions concerning

the state of the market. Thus he could walk into most men's houses quite without ceremony;—even if the master dreamed of kicking him out, the mistress was sure to oppose such measure with might and main. He secured numberless invitations, was proposed to by several papas, and won, or had to think he won, a few hearts; for he came as a rich man and he stayed with dignity, and he departed exacting all the honours. When wending his ways he usually urged a return of visit in the morning, but he was seldom to be found at the caravanserai he specified—was Mirza Abdullah the Bushiri.

The timid villagers collected in crowds to see a kind of Frank in a sort of Oriental dress, riding spear in hand, and pistols in holsters, towards the little encampment pitched near their settlements. But regularly every evening on the line of march the Mirza issued from his tent and wandered amongst them, collecting much information and dealing out more concerning an ideal master,—the Feringhee supposed to be sitting in state amongst the Moonshees, the Scribes, the servants, the wheels, the chains, the telescopes and the other magical implements in which the camp abounded. When travelling, the Mirza became this mysterious person's factotum; and often had he to answer the

question how much his perquisites and illicit gains amounted to in the course of the year.

When the Mirza arrived at a strange town, his first step was to secure a house in or near the bazaar, for the purpose of evening *conversazioni*. Now and then he rented a shop and furnished it with clammy dates, viscid molasses, tobacco, ginger, rancid oil and strong-smelling sweetmeats; and wonderful tales Fame told about these establishments. Yet somehow or other, though they were more crowded than a first-rate milliner's rooms in Town, they throve not in a pecuniary point of view; the cause of which was, I believe, that the polite Mirza was in the habit of giving the heaviest possible weight for their money to all the ladies,—particularly the pretty ones,—that honoured him by patronizing his concern.

Sometimes the Mirza passed the evening in a mosque listening to the ragged students who, stretched at full length with their stomachs on the dusty floor, and their arms supporting their heads, mumbled out Arabic from the thumbed, soiled, and tattered pages of theology upon which a dim oil light shed its scanty ray, or he sat debating the niceties of faith with the long-bearded, shaven-pated, blear-eyed and stolid faced *genius loci*, the Mullah. At other times, when in merrier

mood, he entered uninvited the first door, whence issued the sounds of music and the dance;—a clean turban and a polite bow are the best "tickets for soup" the East knows. Or he played chess with some native friend, or he consorted with the hemp-drinkers and opium-eaters in the *estaminets*, or he visited the Mrs. Gadabouts and Go-betweens who make matches amongst the Faithful, and gathered from them a precious budget of private history and domestic scandal.

What scenes he saw! what adventures he went through! But who would believe, even if he ventured to detail them?

The Mirza's favourite school for study was the house of an elderly matron on the banks of the Fulailee River, about a mile from the Fort of Hyderabad. Khanum Jan had been a beauty in her youth, and the tender passion had been hard upon her, at least judging from the fact that she had fled her home, her husband, and her native town, Candahar, in company with Mohammed Bakhsh, a purblind old tailor, the object of her warmest affections.

"Ah, he is a regular old hyæna now," would the Joan exclaim in her outlandish Persian, pointing to the venerable Darby as he sat at squat in the cool shade, nodding his head and winking his eyes over a pair of pantaloons which

took him a month to sew, "a regular old hyæna now, but you should have seen him fifteen years ago, what a wonderful youth he was!"

The knowledge of one mind is that of a million—after a fashion. I addressed myself particularly to that of "Darby;" and many an hour of tough thought it took me before I had mastered its truly Oriental peculiarities, its regular irregularities of deduction, and its strange monotonous one-idea'dness.

Khanum Jan's house was a mud edifice occupying one side of a square formed by tall, thin, crumbling mud walls. The respectable matron's peculiar vanity was to lend a helping hand in all manner of *affaires du cœur*. So it often happened that Mirza Abdullah was turned out of the house to pass a few hours in the garden. There he sat upon his felt rug spread beneath a shadowy tamarind, with beds of sweet-smelling basil around him, his eyes roving over the broad river that coursed rapidly between its wooded banks and the groups gathered at the frequent ferries, whilst the soft strains of mysterious, philosophical, transcendental Hafiz were sounded in his ears by the other Meerza, his companion, Mohammed Hosayn—peace be upon him!

Of all economical studies this course was the cheapest. For tobacco daily, for frequent

draughts of milk, for hemp occasionally, for the benefit of Khanum Jan's experience, for four months' lectures from Mohammed Bakhsh, and for sundry other little indulgences, the Mirza paid, it is calculated, the sum of six shillings. When he left Hyderabad, he gave a silver talisman to the dame, and a cloth coat to her protector: long may they live to wear them!

* * * * *

Thus it was I formed my estimate of the native character. I am as ready to reform it when a man of more extensive experience and greater knowledge of the subject will kindly show me how far it transgresses the well-established limits of moderation. As yet I hold, by way of general rule, that the Eastern mind—I talk of the nations known to me by personal experience—is always in extremes; that it ignores what is meant by "golden mean," and that it delights to range in flights limited only by the *ne plus ultra* of Nature herself. Under which conviction I am open to correction.

* * * * *

In conclusion, a word with the critic about his "particular mode of spelling Indian proper names." As long as the usus

"Quem penès arbitrium est et jus, et norma loquendi,"

spells or mispells Mecca, Delhi and Bombay

after its own arbitrary fashion, so long from maps, reports and works intended for popular use, it will reject Makkeh or Mukku, Dihli or Dihlee, Mombai or Bombaee. This is only reasonable; why should we write Naples "Napoli" or Austria "Oesterreich?" Besides the vulgar one, there are two systems for Romanizing the Oriental alphabet: that of Sir W. Jones,—as he proposed it, or as it has been modified by later authorities,—elegant enough and scholar-like, but unintelligible to any save the linguist; and secondly, Dr. Gilchrist's "Ultimatum," clumsy, unsightly and, withal, uncommonly hard to be understood. We require another, free from the defects of its predecessors, but how the want is to be supplied I know not.

En attendant, in a work intended for the general reader, I write the word as he would write it himself, were it read out to him, and as he would find it in his map, "Scinde." When composing for the Orientalist, that is or is about to be, I adopt the common modification of Sir W. Jones's system as used by the Indian lexicographers, and indite the name Sindh or Sindhu. And I venture to opine that the brain which finds any absurd confusion in these two different ways must be itself the generator of that absurdity and confusion.

I conclude as I began, with ascribing this introduction of irrelevant matter, upon a very uninteresting subject, to the "extreme opinions" formed, one is puzzled to say where, but propounded with much majesty by king We from his proper throne—the four legged stool.

And so, long-suffering reader, fare thee well!

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